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John Gilbert

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THE
Church of *England's*
W I S H

For the Restoring of
Primitive Discipline.

THE
Church of *England's*
W I S H

For the Restoring of
Primitive Discipline;

Considered, in Order to its being
brought to Effect.

On which Occasion is shewn the Institution,
Nature, End, and Necessity of Discipline
in the Church of Christ.

By John Gilbert

*To Debate of Ceremonies and Words in the Service, &c.
Not considering the power of the Keys, upon which the
Church is Founded, and the Restoring of the Same; is to neg-
lect a Consumption at the Heart, pretending only to Cure the
Hair or the Nails. H. Thorndike's Just Weights and Mea-
sures, Page 255.*

L O N D O N:

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PREFACE.

THE Repeated Assurances which our Gracious Queen has been pleased to give of her Purpose to Preserve the Church of England, and her known Zeal for the same; as also the Zealous Affection to the Church Expressed by both Houses of Parliament in their late Addresses, having given a just ground for those Hopes conceived and declared by the Convocation, That whatever may be wanting to restore our Church to its due Rights and Privileges, Her Majesty will have the Glory of doing it; And the Queen likewise having been Graciously Pleased, not only to approve, but assure their Confidence to this purpose, by her Answer, "That she will always endeavour to Preserve this Church in its Doctrine and Discipline: Why should not this be looked on as the proper time given this Church by the Providence of God to seek the being
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The Preface.

restored to the Authority given it by Christ Jesus; that the Primitive Discipline of Christ's Church may be Revived and Established with Effect in this our Church, for the good of Souls, and the intrest of our common Christianity? Tea, why may it not be Hoped, that at this juncture, (if the Pastors of the Church, who stand Charged with the Ministry, shall Assert (as in Duty they ought) the Right of the Church to an Authority that may Oblige the Conscience, and Bind its Members to a Submission to this Discipline; and shall make it appear also that themselves, who have the care thereof committed to them on behalf of the Church, are desirous to discharge a Conscience in its Execution) the Civil Authority may lend an Assistance, the general good Will of Christians also concurring, to bring it to Effect? It is out of this hope, how faint soever, that the Author of this Tract has attempted to shew therein, That this Church has a Right to have her Discipline Restored, which it has in vain Wished to see effected from the beginning of the Reformation; That those who stand Trusted with this Ministry, cannot discharge a Conscience to God or his Church, but by doing their utmost towards it.

That

The Preface.

That it will not be a sufficient Excuse for such, at the day of Account to say, The Discipline of the Church has been lost, or the Corrupt Age would not endure it, unless their Conscience can Attest that they have been the more Zealous in their Endeavours to Retrieve it, as the necessary Remedy for Cure of that Corruption; that they have done what in them lies also to recover to the Church that Authority which Christ left it Invested with, for the Maintenance of Christianity: That the same Reasons which oblige all that desire to Profess Christianity, to become Members of the Church, ought to prevail with them to yield Effect to this Ministry, which is of God's providing, as the Means of obliging Christians to live up to the excellent Rules of their Holy Profession: That whatever Civil Power, being Christian, in that respect, thinks it self obliged to Maintain the Church, cannot want Evidence of its Obligation to give Effect and Force to this Discipline of the Church, which Carnal Christians are not likely to Submit to otherwise: The very Being of a Church importing this, That there be a Power and Authority, acknowledged for the Maintaining that Christianity which the Church, as a Society, stands Charged to Maintain, as

The Preface.

the Nature of all Societies must Import a Power to Maintain themselves according to the Design and Rules of their Constitution.

Let me not be thought not to foresee many Censures, and much Opposition in this Attempt, which nevertheless, the Part which I have in the Church's Ministry will oblige me to abide. I must expect it to be Objected by some, that there is no such thing as an Authority of such a Nature as the Discipline pretended to importeth, of Right belonging to the Church; that indeed there is no such thing as a Church endued with a Power to such Effect by the Ordinance of our Lord, or the Institution of his Apostles. But I take the Proof made in the following Treatise, That Discipline was of Apostolical Practice, to have obviated all that can be with any Force Objected against the Constitution of the Church, or its Right in this Particular: Inasmuch as Discipline implies the Church to be Constituted a Society, as the Ancient Practice of this Discipline Recorded in the Scripture implies also its Original to be from Christ and his Apostles. I must look that it will be Objected, notwithstanding. That the Ancient Discipline came to Effect by the voluntary Consent of Christians, that in times
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The Preface.

*of Persecution Submitted to such Rules as seemed necessary in that State of Things; and that now, all the Authority the Church hath is from the Laws of the Land in every Christian State; so that what Changes or Alterations are made by the Civil Power, shall take Place, in Bar to any Laws or Customs of the Church. But I am mistaken, if any great matter can be made of this Objection. 'Tis true indeed, The Ancient Discipline came to Effect by the voluntary Consent of Christians; and the Church being a mere Spiritual Society, without any Temporal Power, to enforce by way of Constraint the Effect of its Ministry, it could not be otherwise. But though the Church could lay no outward Constraint, it nevertheless laid a Constraint upon the Conscience, so that those who Consented to submit unto its Discipline, could not have been Christians, had they not so consented. There was therefore an Authority Obliging them in Conscience to yield Effect to those Ministries which God had provided for the Maintenance and Propagation of Christianity. So that that voluntary Act was nevertheless a Duty, in respect of an Authority in the Church, Claiming from them a Submission to its Discipline, though not constraining it by any External Force. Now
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The Preface.

this being the Case, 'tis visible that the Church had an Authority from the Beginning, though this not a Temporal, but Spiritual Authority. It will therefore concern such as will have it, that the Civil Authority may make Changes or Alterations at its pleasure in the Laws and Customs of the Church, and that the Church has now no Authority, to shew by what Right any Civil Power, Professing Christianity, may defeat the Church of any part of the Right whereof it stands Possessed by the Original Institution of our Lord and his Apostles: or give a Reason at least, why the Authority of the Church, which being derived from Christ and his Apostles stood good against the Heathen Powers, should not stand good where the Civil Power Professeth Christianity, which will not be easily done. Whereas it is a very easie matter for me to shew on the contrary, That a State Professing Christianity, and the Protection thereof, ought not only to acknowledge the Authority which the Church has from Christ and the Apostles, but to imploy also its own Authority to render the other Effectual with such as being Christians more out of Intrest than Conscience would not submit otherwise to the Authority and Discipline of the Church.

Some

The Preface.

Some no doubt will say, 'tis Popery, or something like it, to revive Penances, Confession and Discipline. But in this Case I should not be afraid of either Reproach or Censure (were the Discipline of Penance free from Abuses in the Romish Church, and Executed to the Purposes of its Institution in the Church of Christ, that is to say, the Cure of Sin, and procuring in Penitents the disposition, that according to the Gospel qualifyeth for Remission of Sins) freely to profess that I wished the Restoring of such Ecclesiastical Laws as might Restore the Church's Authority, to bring Sinners under the Discipline of Penance, though those Laws were such as the Church of Rome hath, and our Reformation hath not. Yet shall I have no Thanks on that side, when I have said, That the Church of Rome abuseth the Discipline of the Church, and the Penances it enjoyns to Ends not Warranted from Christianity, neglecting that upon which they take place in it. For the Discipline of Penance of Right is this, When any have visibly Transgressed that Profession upon which they were Admitted Members of the Christian Church by Baptism, to call such to an Account, and to enjoyn them such Acts of Humiliation and Self denial as may be instrumental
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The Preface.

(the Grace of God assisting) to work in them a True Repentance; and to Exclude them in part, or altogether from the Communion of the Church, till they shall have Submitted to such Acts of Penance as may warrant the Church to Admit them to her Communion again, as giving some assurance of their true Repentance, and presumption of their recovery of the State of Grace which alone entitles to it. But now this Discipline as Exercised in the Church of Rome, how much soever it be pretended to the advantage of Christianity, is so perverted, as rather to give encouragement to Sin. For whereas the Penitential Works should, according to the Practice of the Primitive Church be first enjoined the Sinner, to work in him a true Humiliation, that thereby being in some measure satisfied of his true Repentance, the Church might with Authority Pronounce him Absolved from those Sins, which might be presumed throughly Repented of: In the Church of Rome the Absolution is first granted, and warranted upon the bare Confession to the Priest, and the Penitential Works that are afterwards imposed, not enjoined with any Instructions of their being designed to work the Hearts to Repentance, and effect the Change in it which
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The Preface.

that supposeth; but Impugned with intent
to Appease and Satisfy the Divine Justice,
in reference to Punishments which this
may inflict notwithstanding the Remission
of the Sin. Wherein, as that Church acts
without Authority in Warranting the Par-
don of Sin by giving Absolution, before
it has procured the only Condition quali-
fying for it according to the Gospel Re-
pentance; So instead of being Ministerial
as it ought to procure that Condition, it
sets it aside, or at least, gives advantage
to Men of Corrupt Hearts to set it aside,
and think themselves little concerned to
work their Hearts to a Repentance for
their Sins, or indeed to perform their Pe-
nances enjoined to the forementioned mista-
ken purpose, when they are before rendred
secure as to the Pardon of their Sins, and
the Remission of all Punishment but what is
Temporal. There is yet a greater Evil in
the Doctrine of the Church of Rome re-
lating to Penance, in what it teacheth, as
to the Vertue of the Priest's Absolution, that
this supplies the defects of a Man's Repen-
tance, so that there is no absolute necessity
of Contrition, which is the sorrow to Re-
pentance, according to the Gospel qualify-
ing for Remission of Sins; but Attrition,
which is short of the other, being only the
Sorrow

The Preface.

Cat. Trid.
de Confes.
Sac. Po-
nit.

Sorrow that ~~arise~~ from fear of Punishment shall become sufficient by the Means of the Priest's Absolution. The Words of their Catechism Relating to this Matter are these. " Although it must be Confessed, " that our Sins are Blotted out by Contrition, yet inasmuch as few arrive to so " great a degree of Sorrow for them as that " requires, they are therefore very few " that can place their hope of Salvation " in that way: Wherefore it was necessary " that our most Merciful Lord should provide for the Common Salvation of Mankind by an Easier way, which out of his " Wise Counsel he did, when he delivered " the Keys of his Heavenly Kingdom to his " Church. For according to the Doctrine " of the Catholick Faith, it must be Believed, and constantly Affirmed by all, " that if a Man be but so Affected in his " Mind, as to be sorry for the Sins he " has committed, intending withal not " to Sin for the time to come, although " he have not that Sorrow which is sufficient to obtain Forgiveness, yet when " he shall have duly Confessed his Sins " unto the Priest, all his Sins shall be " Forgiven and Remitted to him by the " Power of the Keys. And even the Council of Trent it self allows that which is

Council
Trid. Sess.
14. Cap. 4.

The Preface.

is not perfect Contrition to qualify for God's Grace and Pardon. Which Pretence of the Church of Rome, to supply the Defects of Mens Repentance, and abate of that Condition which the Gospel requires to the Remission of Sins, as it is altogether without Warrant from Christ, so does it frustrate the Effect of its own Ministry, inso-much that it is rather Prejudicial than Ministerial to the Ends of Christianity. The Indulgencies likewise granted in the Church of Rome, are no other than abuses of the Power and Authority of the Church in Reference to Relaxations of Penance, which had place in the Primitive times in extraordinary cases, where Penitents shewed a more than ordinary Zeal in the Works of Humiliation they were appointed to undergo, or by some Eminent Acts of Piety shewed themselves to have thoroughly Repented them of their Sins, and that the Love of God had taken place in their hearts. In such cases many times Penitents were Admitted to the Communion of the Church before their performance of all the Penitential Acts that had been enjoined them, the Cure of Sin appearing to be wrought in them which the Discipline of the Church intended. But this Practice can never warrant the Romish Indulgences; dispensed in fa-

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The Preface.

your of Penitents promiscuously, and without regard to Evidence of their Repentance; Not to mention the Unlawful Gain made by the Markets of them, and their use to other purposes than the Abatement, or Remission of Ecclesiastical Discipline, whilst it is pretended that there is a Stock of Merits in the Church, which are allowed to the Account of those to whom it grants these Indulgences. By this it may be discerned, that the Practice of Penance in the Church of Rome is quite different from what it of right ought to be in the Church of Christ: So that indeed that Church has little cause to Boast of her Discipline, unless it were used to better purposes, and made serviceable to the Ends of Christianity. Nevertheless I must say on the other side, that the Reformation which concerned it self justly in the removal of those abuses, should have been no less concerned to preserve a Discipline free from abuses in the Authority it ought to have in the Church of Christ. And this is what our first Reformers would have done, had not the abuses of Discipline been so great and vile, as to give advantage to a Corrupt Age, to despise and reject the Authority that should have given Effect thereto, on pretence of the Abuses therein. This then rendred their Attempt to Establish Primitive

The Preface.

Primitive Discipline impracticable; But we, by Experience have seen and felt what they feared, namely, the Decay of Christian Piety from the loss of this Discipline, and are therefore the more concerned to do what is possible to be done towards the Restoring it, yet with this Care and Caution, that the Abuses be not Restored with it, yea, that they be effectually prevented for the future.

But others probably will censure my Zeal for Discipline, to betray an Affection to the Presbyterian Model. To such, my Answer and Defence is this, If any Sectaries whatever insist Zealously for that which deserves to be insisted on with Zeal by all good Christians; I shall not think shame to be Zealous for the same thing: So likewise if any of our Sects blame us for what is blame-worthy, I cannot think it justifiable in us to cast off the consideration of it, because they may have unduly Separated from the Church on pretence thereof. For Instance, If a Puritan blame us for this, that Scandalous and Profane Persons are not Censured as they ought to be, and Notorious Evil Livers Admitted to the Communion, whom we ought to keep from it: I will not allow indeed this to be a reasonable or just pretence for any to withdraw from

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The Preface.

*the Communion of the Church upon it: There being no manner of Reason to think that another's Wickedness should void the Effect or Benefit of the Sacrament to him that Worthily partakes of it. And besides, all Order and Government in the Church will fall to nothing, if every private Person may take upon him to Judge and Censure others, or make a Separation from, or cause Division in the Church for every Imperfection, or indeed, Abuse of the Church's Authority, or Neglect of them that are concerned to put its Discipline in Execution. But far be it from me to say or think that there is not great blame lying on us, and that justly, for the utter neglect of that Order which our Church hath taken in the Rubrick before the Communion, That if any, of those who intend to Communicate be an Open Notorious Evil Liver——“ The Curate
“ shall advertise him, in any wise not to
“ presume to the Lord's Table till he have
“ openly declared himself to have truly Repented and Amended his former Naughty
“ Life, &c. And the same Order shall the
“ Curate use with whom he perceiveth Malice and Hatred to Reign, not suffering
“ them to be partakers of the Lord's Table,
“ until he knows them to be Reconciled: And
“ if one of the Parties so at Variance be con-
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The Preface.

“tent to forgive the other from the bottom
“of the heart--and to make amends for that
“he himself hath Offended, and the other
“Party will not be perswaded to a godly Uni-
“ty,--the Minister in that case ought to Ad-
“mit the Penitent Person to the Holy Com-
“munion, and not him that is Obstinate.
Which Order of the Rubrick seems to be
made in Pursuance of the 26th. Canon, the
Title of which is, Notorious Offenders
not to be Admitted to the Communion,
and to bring to Effect that Rule which pro-
vides thus. “No Minister shall in any
“wise admit to the Receiving of the Holy
“Communion, any of his Cure or Flock,
“which be openly known to live in Sin No-
“torious without Repentance, nor Malici-
“ous Persons not Reconciled, &c. Doubtless
those that have the Cure of Souls among us
(whose Concern it is to see these good Or-
ders of the Church of England take place)
are not the less, but rather the more con-
cerned to consider of means that may bring
these Orders of our Church to some Effect,
for that our neglect herein is made a pre-
tence by some of our Adversaries, to justi-
fie their Unreasonable Separation: For tho’
the Pretence be such as cannot be justly in-
sisted on by them, yet does it lay to the
charge of those that have the Cure of Souls

The Preface.

in the Church a Neglect, which I am to seek how they will be able to answer to God or his Church, or even to any good Christian, taking Offence thereat. Thus in another like Instance, suppose a Puritan to find fault, that in the Office of Burial we express an Hope touching the Resurrection of the Person Deceased, to Eternal Life, which is so far from being sure and certain as we term it, with reference to all we Bury promiscuously, that indeed it is unwarrantable, and ought not to be in the least mentioned, with reference to many, whose Lives have been known to be notoriously Vicious and Wicked, and of whose Repentance there appears little presumption (the Church especially being concerned that no hope nor encouragement be given to wicked Livers, who will be apt enough to encourage themselves in wickedness from the least Countenance the Church shall give to such as may have reconciled their hopes of Heaven with the enjoyment of their Lusts.) I cannot say that this is no Objection, but, that it would be none if the Discipline of the Church took place, to cut off from the Body of the Church all notoriously Vicious and Wicked Livers; For the Order of the Church for Burial of the Dead, appointing that the Office be not used for any that die Unbaptized

The Preface.

zed or Excommunicate, it might be presumed of all Admitted into the Church by Baptism and dying in its Communion, that having lived according to their Christian Profession (which supposing them not to have done, and the Discipline of the Church taking place they must have been Excluded that Communion) they were in a state of Salvation at their Death; concerning whom therefore, as we should not be without hope, so we should not be afraid to express that Hope, even in Terms expressing a Confidence and Assurance in God and Christ for their having a part in the Resurrection of the Just.

And now as for the Reasons given in these Instances, somewhat relating to the Matter in hand, I cannot think it justifiable in us, if any Sectaries blame us for what is blame-worthy, to lay aside the Consideration of what in Duty ought to be done, to redress whatever may be amiss. So in like manner, I cannot think the Concern, which with all good Christians we ought to have for the Discipline of Christ's Church, should be laid aside, because some of our Sectaries have appeared seemingly more zealous for it than we, or have charged us wrongfully with a want of Zeal in this Case, or made it a Pretence of Separation to set up a better Discipline. On the contrary this should encrease

The Preface.

our zeal to Establish, if possible, the True Primitive Discipline, and bring it to Effect in the Church, to take off thereby all blame from our selves, and all occasion from the Adversary. But at the same time that I have said this, being willing to do our Presbyterian Right so far as they assert Christ the Head of the Church, to have therein appointed a Government in the hands of Church Ministers distinct from the Civil Magistrate, and to have committed to these the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, by vertue whereof they have Power to Remit and Retain Sins, to shut that Kingdom against the impenitent, and to open it unto Penitent Sinners; and that therefore this Power ought to be Exercised, and a Discipline kept up in the Church of Christ; I must declare them nevertheless very much in the wrong, as they seek to have the Government of the Church in their Presbyteries, Excluding Bishops, and denying their Ancient Right, (whereas there is Evidence beyond Contradiction, that for many Ages the Rule and Government of the Church was managed by Bishops in Conjunction with their Presbyters; the Bishop in every particular Church having the Government in Chief, his Presbyters having part with him as Assistants, joyned to, and with him in the Work, yet so as themselves were subjected also to his

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The Preface.

Authority, to be kept thereby under the Rules of Discipline). I must also declare that the Schism, they have made in the Church, upon this and other undue, and unwarrantable grounds, has brought on this Evil Consequence among many others, That the Discipline of the Church they pretend to be so zealous for, is by this very means less practicable and less effectual than otherwise it would or might be made to be. For the Unity of the Church is that which gives Strength to its Authority, and Effect to its Discipline. If Men were under no Obligations from their Christianity to be Members of the Church, the Authority that Admits them to, or Excludes them from it, would in no respect bind the Conscience. And if a number of Christians agreeing together can make themselves a Church, and have the Sacraments among them to the same Effect as they are had in the Church; they then are under no concern to Obey them that have the Rule over them, or to regard their Censures or any of their Attempts to bring them under Discipline. 'Tis a much like Case, as the Church now stands Divided by Schism; suppose its Discipline employed to bring a notorious wicked Liver to Penance, suppose him kept back from the Sacrament, or Excommunicate untill he shall Repent, and give Evidence of his Repent-

The Preface.

ance; the Church's Censure in likelihood, shall have but little Effect, so long as the Offender can join himself to another Society of Christians, and be allowed among them the hopes of Salvation, and the means thereof, which his own Church had denied him. This I look upon as the cause, in part, why Discipline in the Church of England has been so much neglected; it being looked on as of little or no avail, as the Church is divided into so many several Sects, which gives opportunity to Offenders to stand it out with the Church, or to go off to another Communion. Not but that I think it a very weak thing in Pastors to neglect their Duty in this particular, for fear of such an event. The Primitive Church might as well have been deterred from its Discipline for fear of Mens turning Heathens. But this the Church feared not, it being at the hazard of their Souls if they despised the Church and her Power or departed from it; and 'tis at the same hazard if Men despise it, and join with Schismaticks. Nevertheless, as all men are not sensible of the Danger, nor likely to become sensible of it, whilst Christians keep up Separate Communions; it should give Occasion one would think, to those that are zealous for the Establishment of a Discipline in the Church, to bethink themselves first, how the Union of the Church may

The Preface.

may be restored, which would make its Discipline effectual indeed, to the true ends and purposes of its appointment and institution in the Church of Christ.

I would if possible, obviate all Prejudices, and therefore desire to be believed, when I profess my self to have no other Design in what I have done to remonstrate the usefulness and necessity of Discipline, than the common good of Christianity and God's Church, and my own particular good so far only as my Soul may have benefit from the discharge of my Duty, and in, and by the the Establishment of this Discipline it self. And Charity cannot impute to me any other design, it being evident that I may expect no thanks from any of the Parties into which the Christian Church is now unhappily divided. From the Papists I shall have none, having said in effect, that they pretend to Discipline, but use it not aright, yea, pervert it, even to the Prejudice of Christianity: From our Dissenters I can expect none, having said, that they to little purpose are zealous for a Discipline in the Church, when as their Schism has rendred it for the most part ineffectual. If I might expect any thanks, I would hope for it from those of our own Communion; yet can it be from few of these. For this Plea for Discipline supposeth that we have it not, or at least, not to the

The Preface.

the purpose we ought to have it, and implies a fault somewhere, that we have it not, or at least not to purpose. Besides, Discipline strikes at Men's Sins, the Talk of it therefore gives Disturbance, and an endeavour to set it up is an Offence like that of plucking away the Pillows from under the Elbows of such as desire to sleep at their ease.

I shall not be surprized therefore, if many among our selves shew themselves uneasy, and Censure my Labour in this as a design to advance the Power of Church-men. I shall freely own the Clergy to be Parties in this Case, as they have a part in this Ministry from Christ Jesus, therefore they must needs be Parties; but at the same time they are obliged to challenge their Right in this, as in other parts of their Ministry at their utmost hazard, and may therefore with as much reason be suspected to seek themselves, or Power and Authority to themselves in any, or all other parts of their Ministry as in this, and consequently laid aside in all their Ministry as in this part of it: Which if allowed them, does only, together with the Power bring on them a greater Charge; a Charge so great, in respect of the Trust lying upon them, to Rule well the Church of God, that 'tis to be feared, many of the Clergy themselves could be well contented to be without the Power, not

The Preface.

to have the Duty, nor the neglect thereof to lie upon them, or be Charged to their Account. If the Discipline of the Church were once Restored, the Care of Governing well the Church of God (which by this must come on the Bishops of the Church, and which will yet only lie upon them, but they also will be constrained to take upon them and to discharge) will be so great, that he that discharges well and faithfully the Duty will never be envied the advantages of the Office, not at least by Men of Conscience, who must look upon themselves bound to undergo the Labours, Difficulties, and Hazards of the one, if they take upon them the other. The Parochial Minister also will find himself obliged to a more laborious work than that of Preaching to his Congregation every Lord's Day; it will lie upon him to inspect the Lives of his whole Flock, to Visit Families, to Labour in Exhortations, Warnings, Reconciliations, and several other Cares of a Faithful Pastor; and to fulfil the Work of his Ministry, in those things there will appear a necessity that he approve himself in much Patience, in Meekness, in Charity, in Labours, in Diligence, in Watchings, in Self-denial, by Honour and Dishonour, by Evil Report and Good Report, as Proud, yet not abusing his Power in the Ministry, as Weak, or as a Fool, yet Knowing,

The Preface.

Knowing, and not afraid to use the Authority he has as God's Minister; to Admonish, to Reprove, to Rebuke them that Sin, that others may fear. And who is sufficient for these things? that he should desire an Authority of this kind, if this were not a part of the Ministry that he stands entrusted with by God for the good of Souls, of which he must give Account. Besides, the Clergy themselves must become subject to this Discipline, if Restored; and if it be Exercised according to Ancient Practice, it will be more severe upon them than others, and call them to account for failures in reference to their Office as well as irregularities in their Manners. It must therefore be a very weak, as well as groundless suspicion, that shall charge the Clergy with Self-seeking or Pride in their desire of Discipline. My fear and suspicion is of another Nature, viz. that many of them may think it is better with them as it is (they now living at ease, freed of the Care, and Burden, and Hazard that would attend the impartial Exercise and Execution of the Primitive Discipline, their own necks also got from under the Yoke) and so content themselves to let go the Discipline of the Church altogether upon the Common Excuse, That the Corrupt Age will not endure it. But such as are inclinable to think thus, that things

The Preface.

things are best as they are, and can be content after this manner, let them impartially search and examine their own hearts whether there lie no Corruption there that makes them not to love this Discipline, and bethink themselves whether the Excuse upon which we are apt to hold our selves Excusable, giving and taking it as an Excuse to and from each other, will stand in any stead at the day of Account. No! the very Excuse will rise up in the Judgment, and Condemn such as are content to have the Discipline of Christ's Church laid aside in a time when there is the most need of it, to Reform that Corruption that Exalts it self against it. But I go farther than need is; I am not to think that any of my Brethren in the Ministry will weaken my hands, but rather strengthen them.

I am not under any Apprehension therefore of meeting in my way, what would be an invidious charge, That I step before my Superiors in this Work. I plead indeed the necessity of Discipline, but pretend not to give Rules for it, nor yet to say how far the Present times are capable of those which were Rules in the Primitive Church, which should therefore be at least in some measure regarded by the present Church, if it would be one and the same with that which was from the Beginning, nor indeed

The Preface.

indeed do I take upon me so much as to propose the ways and means by which the Restoration of Discipline is to be attempted: I look on these as belonging to Superiors, who are obliged to answer and account for what ought to be done therein. Yea, with them I leave, and to them submit the Opinion which I have thought my self obliged to offer in this matter. I leave it with them, because if there be Truth in what is urged for the necessity of Discipline, it will be their Concern, and ought to be their Care to bring it to some Effect. I submit it to them to avoid the Offence which might be otherwise given by speaking and insisting upon Truth out of due Time. For I am sensible that Unity in the Church is of so great Advantage to the Service of God and our Common Christianity, that it ought to cover not only very great Imperfections in the Laws of the Church, but even many faults in the Administration of those Laws. Nevertheless, as in this Case the Church of England hath her self declared the Imperfection, I am satisfied that I give no just cause of Offence in declaring what is wanting: And as things are come to that pass, that instead of faults in the Administration of Discipline according to imperfect Rules, we have now in a manner, no Administration of it at all, it seems time to say what ought to be the
Disci-

The Preface.

Discipline of Christ's Church, and to Charge home the Neglect of the Administration of what is, wheresoever the fault lies: Provided it be with deference and submission to Superiours, that they be allowed their Right to judge whether the Time be proper and safe to make an Attempt towards the regaining this Discipline to the Church, (I mean safe in reference to the Intrest of God's Church and the Unity thereof, not in reference to the Worldly Intrest of the Persons concerned to act for the Church at their utmost Peril and Hazard in every proper and needful Time) as also what means are to be used, as well for procuring the Establishment thereof, as for the rendring it Effectual when Establish'd.

The only Offence that I need fear my self to have given is in this, That I have undertaken a Design of this Consequence and am not able to go through with it as it deserves; which may indeed give Offence to Good Men, and which is worse, be a Prejudice to the Rights of God's Church: But I think this, That no Instrument is insufficient in the hands of God, who often chooses the Meanest, that it may appear to be his Work, and that the Praise may be to God and not to Man; And if the Thing be from him that I stand up for, he will stay up the Feeble and Heavy Hands that are held up for the Truth,

The Preface.

*Truth, even till, it shall have prevailed.
I likewise think that there are many good
Men (Zealous for the Cause of God and his
Church) ready at hand to strengthen that
which in me is weak ; and that such will ex-
cuse my weakness on the score of my having
appeared forward to do to the utmost of my
Ability.*

T H E

THE
Church of *England's*
WISH,
In Reference to the Restoring
of Primitive Discipline, &c.

CHAP. I.

THE Church of *England* (as it's well known) in the *Communion against Sinners*, hath declared a great Zeal for the renewing of that *Ancient Discipline* of Penance which was in Force in the Primitive Church. Its Words are these : " Brethren, In the Primitive Church there was a Godly Discipline, that at the beginning of *Lent*, such Persons as stood convicted of notorious Sin, were put to open Penance, " and

The Church of England's Wish.

Homily of
the Right
Use of the
Church.
Part 2.

“ and punished in this World, that their
 “ Souls might be saved in the Day of the
 “ Lord; and that others admonish’d by
 “ their Example, might be the more afraid
 “ to offend. Instead whereof, (until the
 “ said *Discipline* may be restored again,
 “ which is much to be wished) it is thought
 “ good, &c. Concerning which *Disci-*
 “ *pline*, in one of the *Homilies* it saith thus.
 “ In the *Primitive Church*, which was
 “ most *holy* and *godly*, and in the which *due*
 “ *Discipline* with Severity, was used against
 “ the Wicked, open Offenders were not
 “ suffered once to enter into the House of
 “ the Lord, nor admitted to Common-
 “ Prayer, and the use of the Holy Sacra-
 “ ments, with other true Christians, until
 “ they had done open Penance before the
 “ whole Church. And this was practised
 “ not only upon mean Persons, but upon
 “ the Rich, Noble, and Mighty Persons,
 “ yea, upon *Theodosius*, that puissant and
 “ mighty Emperor; whom for committing
 “ a grievous and wilful Murder, *St. Am-*
 “ *brose* Bishop of *Milain* reproved sharply,
 “ and did also *Excommunicate* the said Em-
 “ peror, and brought him to open Penance.
 “ And they that were so justly exempted
 “ and banished (as it were) from the
 “ House of the Lord, were taken, as they
 “ be indeed, for Men divided and separa-
 “ ted

The Church of England's Wish.

“**te**d from Christ's Church, and in most
“ dangerous Estate, yea, as St. Paul saith,
“ even *given unto Satan* the Devil for a
“ time, and their Company was shunned
“ and avoided of all Godly Men and Wo-
“ men, until such time as they by Repen-
“ tance and Publick Penance were recon-
“ ciled. Thus was the Practice, as it
saith afterwards, *When Religion was most*
Pure, and nothing so Corrupt as it hath been
of late days. Comparing this in the *Homily*
with that Passage in the *Commination*
against Sinners, there is Reason to con-
clude, That the Church apprehended
Discipline to be of *Primitive Practice*, used
in the *Purest Times* of Christianity; to be
likewise necessary and useful for the Good
of Souls, for the well Government of
Christians in Godliness, and for reducing
Sinners to the Way of Righteousness; and
that this was the true Ground of the De-
fire exprest for its being restored. This
the *Expedient* devised and used by the
Church in its stead, until that may be ef-
fected, does also plainly shew. For to
what End serveth the *Commination against*
Sinners, but by Threats of God's Judg-
ments (which 'tis a vain thing for any
guilty Soul not to think, or not to ac-
knowledge due to its Sins,) to awaken
Men to do of themselves that which the

The Church of England's Wish.

Discipline of the Church (were it *in Force*) would call on and constrain them to do ? *Namely*, To repent them of their Sins, and amend their Doings, and make their Lives to answer their Holy Profession for the future ; thereby to regain the Hope of God's Favour, and an Interest in his Mercy, forfeited by their Transgressions. And the Appointment of this, till the other might be restored, intimates that could it be restored, it would be of greater Efficacy for this purpose, than this *Commination* can be thought to be.

This appearing, it ought surely to be taken into Consideration, Whether those who are intrusted on behalf of the Church, to execute its Ministry for the Good of Souls and the Interest of Christianity, do enough towards the discharge of a good Conscience, in *wishing* once a Year, at reading the Office on *Ashwednesday*, that the *Discipline* of the Church were *restored*. Or whether it lye not upon them to do something towards the *regaining* of it, that the Church may be restored to the Power it hath from Christ, and that Power employed to the Effect intended by our Blessed Lord, who committed the same to his Church. If any, when this comes to be considered, can content themselves only to *wish* the *Discipline* of the Church *restored*,

The Church of England's Wish.

3

red, without moving either Hand or Foot towards it ; they are such as either understand not the Usefulness of the Discipline of the Church to Christian Purposes, or make no Conscience of discharging a Duty to God in the Execution of its Ministry to serve those Ends. I say this, because an honest Conscience can never satisfy it self, that *wishing* the Ministry of the Church to take place, and have the Effect it ought to have, is the same with *doing* that which may restore and render it effectual. Wishes are indeed Marks of a good Intention, and an acceptable Zeal, where no more is possible to be done ; but ever to wish, and make no Attempt towards the Thing wished for, if it be Zeal, is such as is a Reproach to it self. Suppose then only for the present, what in this Treatise is to be proved and made appear, That *Discipline* is of the Appointment of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and a *Ministry* with which the Church stands charged at all times, as being *absolutely necessary* for its good Government ; and shall not *Pastors* stand convicted hereby, that they can never discharge the Trust upon their hands to God and his Church, nor be *True* to their *Master*, or to the *Souls* which are their Care, unless they do their utmost towards the restoring and executing the Discipline of

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Christ's

Christ's Church? Shall not even *Private Christians* hereby stand convinced, that whilst the Church is without its Discipline, they are without the Benefit of it to their Souls; and be hence concerned, not only to wish but to do what on their parts may be done, to restore that Discipline, which being restored, may be ministerial to the good of their own Souls in particular, as well as serviceable to the general good of God's Church? The Duty of many, and the Concerns of all Christians in this matter, will appear, I am persuaded, more plain than to be disowned, and of more Importance than to be thought fit to be laid aside, if there be Evidence found to prove, (what I have desired leave to suppose only for the present, but taking it upon me to make the Proof,) That Discipline hath its beginning from Christ and his Apostles: That these left in the Church a Power and Authority for exercising and executing thereof: And that to the Authority of the Church for this purpose, all Christians ought to be subject.

Let us see then what Proof may be made of this from Scripture, as also from the Practice of the Primitive Church: For I may challenge this, That where in Scripture a Foundation is laid for the Church's Practice, there the Practice of the Primitive

give Church giveth Light to the true
Sense of the Scripture relating to that
Matter.

C H A P. II.

NOW as to the Origine of Church Discipline, I take upon me to prove it a Divine Institution, founded on the Laws of Christ and his Apostles. Could this indeed not be proved, yet supposing it useful and beneficial, tending to the advancement of Godliness; as to all other Bodies a Right is allowed to establish Orders to regulate themselves by, and a Power of making Laws for the benefit and common good of their Society, and of excluding those from their Body who will not submit to them; so ought the Church to be allowed a Power to appoint a Discipline, to which all her Members should be subject; provided the Discipline be such as is not inconsistent with the Laws of the Gospel, which is the Rule to which the Society of the Church in general is to be subject: And much more is this to be allowed, if the Discipline in its due exercise effectually minister to the very same Ends of Piety and Virtue which the Laws of the

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The Church of England's Wish.

Gospel and the Christian Religion designed to promote. In this respect alone the Establishment of it would be lawful, and the Submission to it necessary. But this reacheth not the present Case ; which is not, Whether the Church may appoint a Discipline within it self, and its Members be bound to submit thereunto ; but, That the Church is obliged to restore that Discipline which anciently was, and all Christians concerned to give and yield thereto the effect it ought to have in the Church of Christ. Now nothing less than a Proof of its being of Divine Institution, can lay on the Church an Obligation to this purpose : For the Church having a Power of making Laws within it self, may indeed if it see fit, set up a Discipline on account of its Expediency and Usefulness to the Ends of Christianity : But its being expedient or useful to Ends of the Christian Religion, will not oblige the Church of necessity to set it up or to restore it ; the Church being Judge of the Expediency, and free to use any other Means that may be thought as effectually to serve those Ends. But if it appear that Discipline is a part of the Ministry with which Christ has charged his Church ; then shall the Church be obliged as to execute, so to hold, and keep, and maintain the same ; and private Christians

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The Church of England's Wish.

9

in Conscience as well as for Unity's sake to submit thereunto : Yea, the Church shall be obliged to restore it, if lost, as well as to reform Abuses in its Exercise ; to assert the Powers it hath from Christ to execute this part of its Ministry, and its Right to that Power if she be despoiled of it, or if any Attempt be made to weaken her Authority, or to wrest it out of her hands.

And that Discipline is an Order Instituted by our Saviour and his Apostles, will appear plainly, after we shall have laid together what is to be found to this purpose in Scripture, and compare the same with the Proceedings in the Primitive Times of Christianity ; which we shall perceive consonant to the Rules of Christ and his Apostles in the Case, and declarative of the meaning of those Rules.

In the First place, I take notice of our Lord's giving the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, together with the Power of *remitting* and *retaining* Sins, to his Church. This we find given first to St. Peter, Matth. 16. 19. in these Words, " I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven. And again,

again, *Matth.* 18. 17. to the Body of his Disciples; "If he will not hear thee, &c. "tell it to the Church; but if he neglect "to hear the Church, let him be unto "thee as an Heathen and a Publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall "bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on "Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven." And again, *John* 20. 23. to his Twelve Apostles; "Whosoever Sins ye remit, they "are remitted unto them; and whose "soever Sins ye retain, they are retained. 'Tis needless for me to go about to prove to Persons unprejudiced, That the Power given to St. Peter, and that given the rest of the Disciples, is one and the same. *Binding* and *loosing* are doubtless of the same Import with *remitting* and *retaining* Sins: And as this is the Effect of the Power of the Keys, it is to be supposed of them that are empower'd to work this Effect, that they have the same Power given them, which the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven import. And what that is, is the Enquiry that I am at present concerned with. Now the proper Use of a Key is to open a Door, to give entrance to those we think fit to admit, or to shut and lock it against such as we would exclude the House. According therefore to the most natu-

natural, and least forced Sense of the Words, *the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven* import a Power of admitting into the *House or Church* of God, or of shutting out and excluding thence; the Church of Christ being called the *Kingdom of Heaven*, as being the Society wherein God's Kingdom is set up, where the God of Heaven reigneth and ruleth, and where his Laws and Will are observed and obeyed from the Heart: Or, as the Admittance to that Society giveth Right to an Inheritance in God's Eternal Kingdom in Heaven; and the being excluded thence, importeth the being shut out of the Heavenly Kingdom, into which none have Right to enter, but those who are of the Family and Household, *i. e.* the Church of Christ: In this respect the Power of the Keys may imply the admitting to, or excluding from Heaven it self; though this, not in a strict Sense, but as the one ordinarily dependeth on the other, and as there is so far a Relation between them, that a due Admission into the Church of Christ, giveth ground to hope for an Admittance into his Heavenly Kingdom; as on the other hand, an Exclusion from his Church on Earth giveth cause to fear an Exclusion from his Kingdom in Heaven; and doth indeed exclude thence, without Repentance for those Sins which merit-

merited Exclusion from the Church, as having first deserved Exclusion from Heaven. *Binding and loosing*, and *retaining and remitting* Sins, as I have said, import the same thing: For where there is no hope of Sins being forgiven, there Sin may be said to remain, as it were, bound upon the Conscience, the Guilt taking hold of the Conscience in such manner, that it can no way get clear of it; where on the other hand there is hope of Forgiveness, the Knot is loosed which bound Men over to Punishment. Now these being said to be Effects of the *Power of the Keys*, it is intimated that this Power opening and giving admittance into the Church of Christ, and thereby to the hope of God's Pardon as to our Sins, and of admittance into his Heavenly Kingdom, does therein remit Mens Sins, and let them loose from the Punishment to which they were bound by them; as on the other hand, that it retaineth and binderth them upon the Conscience, when it shutteth out and excludeth from the Church of Christ, thereby excluding and shutting out from the hope of God's Promises, whether as to Pardon or Salvation. Moreover, those Words of our Saviour, *Tell the Church*, and the Obligation presumed on all to *hear the Church*, as to what it might admonish them, about
their

their Faults complained of, and the consequence to those that shall refuse to *hear the Church*, (to be looked on and accounted as an *Heathen* or a *Publican*,) and the Reason immediately given upon it, in the words, *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven;* (wherein as it's implied that the Church proceed to *bind* or *loose*, according as Men shall hear or not hear what it shall say to them, in reference to what may have been done by them contrary to their Christian Duty, so it is also declared that the Sentence of the Church on Earth shall be ratified in Heaven.) These together intimate plainly a Power lodged in the Church to take Cognizance of what Men may do contrary to their Duty, and a necessity on them to submit to the Church's Authority, in what the Church shall think fit to direct or admonish them thereupon; and that their Sins shall be *bound upon them*, so as not to be forgiven by God, if the Church shall proceed to censure their Crimes, when it cannot prevail with them to amend.

It is not my purpose to say, that the Inferences I have made from these Scriptures, and the Reasons given for drawing those Inferences, and to argue the meaning

ing of them that which I have given, are to be the Title upon which the Right of the Church to this Power of the Keys, and to a Discipline (Being the effect of this Power, limiting the Conditions, upon compliance with which, Men may be admitted into the Church, and to the Privileges thereof ; but in case of Non-compliance, excluded and shut out, as from the Church, so from the Privileges and Hopes belonging thereto) standeth or fasteth. But that, these Scriptures well bearing this Sense, and the Inferences easily deducible from them, the Practice of the Apostles and the Primitive Church being such as would and must have been, had the Authority and Power implied to be given in these Scriptures, been given in the plainest Terms that could be expressed, the subsequent Practice shall confirm this to be the Sense of those Scriptures, which has been said to be ; and these Scriptures again shall be looked on as a good Foundation for that Power and Discipline which the Church from the beginning exercised : And when it shall appear from other Scriptures, that the Apostles in their time took care for this Power and Discipline to be employed and executed ; as it shall be thought that these did this by Authority from their Great Master, so it shall be

The Church of England's Wish.

be an Obligation upon the Church to do the same at all times.

This Power of the Church therefore, and its Discipline, shall stand as on a firm Foundation, being built upon these Scriptures, notwithstanding another Sense may be given of them; inasmuch as they who may give to them another Sense, shall not be able to wrest them from this. Several I know, heretofore Adversaries to the Power and Authority of the Church, have endeavoured to give of these Scriptures a different meaning, and to wrest them from the Sense here supposed; but Answers having been given on behalf of the Church, that have silenced the Adversary, I do not think my self concerned to revive the Controversy. But a Person lately, concerned to uphold the Power and Authority of the Church, having nevertheless given up these Scriptures, as not belonging to, or at least as very improperly belonging to the Matter they have been here applied to; I think my self concerned to consider what is said thereupon. I mean what is said by the *Reverend Bishop of Sarum*, in his *Exposition of the Thirty nine Articles*. I must do Right to his Lordship in the first place, and say, That the most of what may be found in his Book to such purpose, is not urged against the due Power

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The Church of England's Wish.
of them that which I have given, at
be the Title upon which the Right of
Church to this Power of the Key
to a Discipline (being the effect
is Power, limiting the Conditions, up
compliance with which, Men may be
mitted into the Church, and to the Pri
ges thereof; but in case of Non-co
liance, excluded and shut out, as fr
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sily deducible from them,
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ing such as would and
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shall

in a Debate Mat 16.
19.
I will give thee the

Power: that by the
Power I am "generally

the Dispensation of
the Kingdom; that there-

is no and least forced
Interpretations must be, that

under the Dispensation
the proper use of a Key

is not; that this agrees
with the

He that hath the Key of
the Kingdom, and with the Phrase

Knowledge, with which the
Power is described. And that this

is what S. Peter did in opening
the Kingdom to the Jews, and in opening the

Kingdom to the Gentiles, Preaching to Corne-
lius, That this is a clear and plain

Interpretation of the Words, and those who would
understand further, and understand by

the Kingdom of Heaven our Eternal
Life must use many distinctions, &c.

Which are these Words. "Though at
the time it is not to be denied but

under the Figure of Keys, the Power
of Discipline, and the Conduct and Ma-

agement of Christians *may be understood.*
Which last words you see I am not to

contend with the *Exposition* what is granted
is, that under the Figure of Keys the

C

Power

Rev. 3 7.
Luke 11.
52.

er and Authority of the Church, but in opposition to the exorbitant Power and Authority claimed by the *Pope* and Church of *Rome*. Therefore it would not be a just suspicion, should it be thought design to undermine the Church in its Doctrine or Discipline, in a Book wherein much is said with great Learning for the Defence of both. But there being no necessity to deny these Scriptures to have their full force for establishing the Authority and Power of the Church, in defence of what *our Church* has acted in the *Reformation*, against the pretended Power and Authority of the *Pope* or *Church of Rome*; and it seeming to me that his Lordship, by endeavouring to give another Meaning to these Scriptures, with purpose to overthrow an Authority that cannot stand upon them in their true Meaning, has thereby drawn away some of the chief Stones out of the Foundation upon which the due Power and Authority of the Church standeth; by which the Building seems weakned, and the Discipline of the Church not to stand firm upon the Props with which his Lordship would uphold it: I therefore for that Reason only, shall debate the Sense of these Scriptures, that they properly belong to that which they have been here applied to. It is said then
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in the Exposition, Pag. 190. in a Debate Mat 16.
19.
 about that Scripture. *I will give thee the*
Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: that by the
 Words *Kingdom of Heaven* “generally
 “through the Gospel, the Dispensation of
 “the Messias is understood; that there-
 “fore the most natural and least forced
 “Exposition of the Words must be, that
 “St. Peter was to open the Dispensation
 “of the Gospel. The proper use of a Key
 “being to open a Door; that this agrees
 “with the Words, *He that hath the Key of*
 “*the House of David,* and with the Phrase Rev. 3 7.
 “of the *Key of Knowledge,* with which the Luke 11.
 “Lawyers are described. And that this 52.
 “agrees with what S. Peter did in opening
 “the Gospel to the *Jews,* and in opening the
 “Door to the *Gentiles,* Preaching to *Corne-*
 “*lius,* &c. That this is a clear and plain
 “Sense of the Words, and those who would
 “carry them further, and understand by
 “the Kingdom of Heaven our Eternal
 “Happiness must use many distinctions, &c.
 After which are these Words. “Though at
 “the same time it is not to be denied but
 “that under the Figure of Keys, the Power
 “of Discipline, and the Conduct and Ma-
 “nagement of Christians *may be understood.*
 By which last words you see I am not to
 contest with the *Exposition* what is granted
 in it, that under the Figure of Keys the
 C Power

- Power of Discipline may be understood, and consequently this Scripture in some sense may refer thereto; but that it is properly applicable to this Matter. And to make this appear, I say as the *Exposition*, that by the Words *Kingdom of Heaven* generally through the Gospel, the *dispensation of the Messias* is understood; but then by the Dispensation of the Messias we are to understand as well the whole Oeconomy, by which the Kingdom of the Messias is Ordered and Governed, as also the Body of the Subjects of his Kingdom, *i.e.* his Church, as the Preaching of his Gospel for gathering a People to become Subjects in his Kingdom. Thus in the Words of the Baptist and of our Sa-
- Mat 3 2. viour, cited in the *Exposition*; *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*: by the
- Mark 1. Kingdom of Heaven is meant a New Oeco-
15. nomy different from that of Moses. And again, *The Time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at Hand*; given for a Reason why Men should Repent and Believe the Gospel, for that the Time was now come, in the which God would Govern them by a New Oeconomy. Thus it also signifies the Body of Christians, or the Church, in the following Passages: "Whosoever shall do
- Mat. 5 19 "and teach them, the same shall be cal-
"led great in the *Kingdom of Heaven*, *i.e.*
among

“ among Christians. And except your Right-
 “ teousness exceed that of the Scribes and
 “ Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into
 “ the Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* ye can-
 “ not be Christians. And again, *For of* Mark 10.
 “ *such is the Kingdom of God, i. e.* of such 14, 15.
 “ Tempèr and Disposition are they who are
 “ the Church of God. And whosoever shall
 “ not receive the *Kingdom of God* as a lit-
 “ tle Child, he shall not enter *therein*; *i. e.*
 whosoever shall not receive the Gospel or
 Word of God with that Meekness and Sub-
 missiveness and Humility as is in Children;
 shall neither have entrance into his King-
 dom of Grace here, nor of Glory hereaf-
 ter; *i. e.* neither into his Church, nor in-
 to Heaven. And in the Parable where the
Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* the Church, is Com-
 pared to a Net full of Fiskes of all sorts,
 good and bad. The Words *Kingdom of*
Heaven therefore signifying usually the
 Church of Christ and the Government
 thereof, (and the proper use of a Key be-
 ing to open a Door, as the Exposition
 saith rightly); the *Keys* of the Kingdom
 of Heaven shall properly signify the Pow-
 er or Authority of Admitting to, or Exclu-
 ding from the Church, and the Discipline
 Conducting and Governing Christians with-
 in the same. And this shall best agree
 with the Scripture from whence this Ex-

pression seems borrowed; namely that which was said to *Eliakim* Son of *Hilkiah*, *Eesai.* 22. 23. And the Key of the House of David will I lay upon his Shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open: And with what is said of our Lord's having the Key of the House of David, *Rev.* 3. 7. When as *Eliakim* being set over the King's Court, and having the Government thereof Committed into his Hand, *Ver.* 21. is said to have the Key of the House, to Admit and Exclude whom he pleased; so the Apostles by having the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, shall be understood to be made under our Lord, Stewards of his Church, with Power of Admitting to, and Excluding from it by Baptism and Penance. And if it will be an Argument of any moment to make out the truth of the Interpretation, that there was an accomplishment of the Thing in *St. Peter's* Person, to whom the Keys were first given; There are Acts of his appearing to be done in consequence of this Power and Commission; as for Instance. His Excluding *Simon Magus* from the Benefit of Christianity, *Acts* 8. 20. *Thou hast neither Part nor Lot in this Matter, for thy heart is not right before God.* Which Words are by Men of Learning, supposed spoken with an

an Authority, Excluding him from all Part and Lot therein. And even in the very Instance mentioned in the *Exposition*, when he first opened a Door to the *Gentiles* Preaching to *Cornelius*; there appears an Act of His, done in pursuance of this Commission, viz. the *Baptizing* him and his Household, and judging them fit to be Baptized, notwithstanding they were *Gentiles*, therein admitting them, and also judging of their Right to be Admitted into the Church of Christ, which was an Authoritative Act, and valid by his having the Power imply'd in the Charge of the Keys. But especially if it appear, as it will hereafter in this Discourse, that, as the Keys were given first to *St. Peter*, and after to the Twelve Apostles and to the Church, (at least the Power therein imply'd) So not only *St. Peter*, but the rest of the Apostles, yea the whole Church have acted thereupon, as having such Power; It shall not be enough to say, as the Bishop does in his *Exposition* in a faint Expression, *That under the Figure of the Keys the Power of Discipline may be understood*, but that by, and with the Keys, this Power is conveyed to the Church, and is become part of its Ministry. And this being said, I do not apprehend that I shall be put much to my shifts for distinctions to justify the

Expounding the Words *Kingdom of Heaven* to mean the Church of Christ, and the *Keys* to be the Power of Discipline therein; having need of only one distinction to help me, if I should go further, and Expound the *Kingdom of Heaven* to mean our Eternal Happiness, and the *Keys* to imply a Power relating even to that, namely, That the Power then is not to be understood to be *Absolute*, as in our Saviour Christ, but *Ministerial*, as in Persons Acting under our Lord, with Limits upon their Power from the Conditions of his Gospel.

But again, As for that of *Binding* and *Loosing*, and the *Confirming in Heaven* what should be done in *Earth* by virtue of this Power. The *Exposition*, Page 190. Saith thus, "The Words *Binding* and "*Loosing* are used by the Jewish Writers, "in the Sense of Affirming or Denying "the Obligation of any Precept of the "*Law* that might be in Dispute; so according to this common form of Speech, "and the Sense formerly given of the "*Words Kingdom of Heaven*, the meaning of these Words must be, That Christ "Committed to his Apostles the Dispensing "his Gospel to the World, by which he Authorized them to Dissolve the Obligation "of the *Mosaical* Laws, and to give other "Laws

“ Laws to the *Christian Church*, which they
 “ should do under such visible Characters
 “ of a Divine Authority, Impowring and
 “ Conducting them in it, that it should be
 “ very Evident that what they did on Earth
 “ should be Ratify'd in Heaven. These
 “ Words thus understood carry in them a
 “ clear sense which agrees with the whole
 “ Design of the Gospel. But this Sense,
 how clear soever, was too far fetch'd to be
 Insisted on immediately as the only Sense
 of the Words. Therefore the *Exposition*
 says further very truly. “ But *whatsoever*
 “ *may be their Sense*, there was nothing
 “ given particularly to St. Peter by them,
 “ which was not likewise given to the rest
 “ of the Apostles; Intimating, that they
 might bear another Sense: Nevertheless,
 Page 274. To prevent this Scripture from
 being made use of as an Argument for
 Confession of Sins to be made to a Priest
 on account of a Power supposed in the Mi-
 nisters of Christ's Church to bind and
 loose Men's Sins, the *Exposition* saith, That
 “ the Power of *Binding* and *Loosing* given to
 “ the Apostles had been shewn on another
 “ Head, to belong to other matters, (therein
 referring, as I suppose, to what had been
 Argued of this Matter in Page 190.)

I agree with the Reverend Bishop of Sa-
 rum, you may be sure in this, that *what-*

soever their Sense may be, there was nothing given particularly to St. Peter by them; which was not likewise given to the rest of the Apostles, and likewise that there's no absolute Necessity for Confession of a Man's Sins to be made to the Priest in order to their being Forgiven: inward Repentance with Confession to God alone, so it be sincere, and effectual to the Reforming of that which a Man Repents of for the future, doubtless qualifying for Pardon of Sin with God, whether Confession be made thereof to the Church or not, and without any Act of its Ministry passing upon it. But by no means can I submit to acknowledge that his Lordship has given the true or proper Sense of the Words *Binding* and *Loosing*. For I have said and shewn before, that the Words *Kingdom of Heaven* mean somewhat else than Preaching the Gospel, viz. Christ's Church gathered thereby: and so have taken off one Argument upon which the *Exposition* groundeth the new Sense it hath given to these Words. I submit to the Bishop's Learning in this, that the Terms of *Binding* and *Loosing* are used by the *Jews*, to signifie the Declaring of what is Prohibited or Permitted by the Law; but it shall not hence follow that Christ hereby Committed to his Apostles the Dispensing of his Gospel to the World,

and

and Authorized them to Dissolve the Obligation of the *Mosaical* Laws, and to give other Laws to the *Christian* Church under the Characters of a Divine Authority, Evidencing that what they did on Earth should be Ratify'd in Heaven. For tho' this be a Truth, that Christianity has voided the Obligation of the Law of *Moses*, and that the Laws of Christ and the Apostles are now Laws to the Church, and Confirmed by a Divine Authority; Nevertheless it shall be no easie thing to infer this Truth from this Power of *Binding* and *Loosing* given by Christ to his Apostles: This would be no Argument to a *Jew*, and is very little of an Argument to a *Christian*, who can very hardly understand, I am persuaded, our Lord intending in these his Words to overthrow the *Mosaick* Law; and I know of none that ever alledged this Scripture for such a Purpose. But indeed the Correspondence between the Law and the Gospel must be allowed to infer from the usual signification of the Words *Binding* and *Loosing* among the *Jews*, what the Bishop of *Sarum* would not willingly allow those that Dispute Controversies for the Church of *Rome*, which yet they may Challenge, Namely, the Power of making Laws to be convey'd to the Church by this Power of *Binding* and *Loosing* given by our Lord
to

to his Apostles: That as there was a Power under the Law to determine Cases in dispute, and to decide what was Lawful and Unlawful, according to *Deut. 17. 12.* So the Power of *Binding* and *Loosing* here given the Church shall be understood of a like Power and Authority in the Church of Christ, to determine upon Cases that may arise, and oblige its Members to submit to her Judgment and Decisions. Yet this shall not serve however, the Purpose of the *Romanists*, because this Power and the Effect of it shall be limited to those things which after the Preaching of our Lord's Gospel remained for his Apostles and Disciples as well as their Assistants and Successors, to Determine and Appoint for the Framing of God's Church, and for the Conduct and Government of the same in Christianity; so that nothing of this Authority shall be advanced to the prejudice of that Gospel Truth, or the Religion of Jesus Christ, antecedent to this Authority itself; in dependance upon which, as well as in subservience thereto, this Authority is to Proceed and Act.

But neither do I take this to be the Primary or Proper Sense of the Words, (though I own it deducible from, and in some sort included therein) but that the *Power of Binding and Loosing* being expressed

pressed to be Granted by, and with the *Keys* of God's House; by *Binding* and *Loosing* shall be meant the *Opening* or *Shutting* the *Doors of his Church*, that is, the Admitting into, or Excluding out of it; So as *Binding* shall signify the Shutting out of the Church for Sin, and *Loosing*, the Admitting into the Church, or retaining in the Church as free from Sin. And as Admitting to, and Excluding from the Church is, or ought to be a Just and Lawful Presumption of Admitting or Excluding from Heaven; in that respect its said, that *Whatsoever is Bound on Earth shall be Bound in Heaven, and whatsoever is Loosed on Earth, shall be Loosed in Heaven*, intimating, that Men that are *Bound* or *Loose*, as to the Church, are so really as to God: The same Thing or Things Morally and Legally Entitling to Heaven as to the Church, obtaining Remission of Sins according to the Gospel, and Entitling to the Sacraments of the Church, assuring that Remission, making an Heir of Life Everlasting and a Christian; and on the other hand, deserving to be Excluded Heaven if deserving to be Excluded the Church, to be shut out from God's Pardon, if deserving to be denied the hopes of it by the Church, and Excluding from his Heavenly Kingdom, if deserving to be Excluded from the Church

of

of Christ and Privileges of the same. And that this is the sense of the Words *Binding* and *Loosing*, appears not only from what was supposed before by me, of the Church proceeding to *Bind* or *Loose*, according as Men shall *hear* or not *hear* what it shall say to them in reference to what may have been done by them contrary to their Christian Duty : But likewise from all that shall be shewn hereafter in this Discourse of the Practice of the Apostles, and of the Church agreeably to this Sense of the Words.

Exposit.
39th. Art.
P. 267.

But again, as for that other Scripture which I have said to be a Ground for Ecclesiastical Discipline, *Tell the Church* ; The Bishop of *Sarum* in his Exposition of the 33d. Article (Referring to Excommunication, and Persons Excommunicate, who are to be looked on as *Heathens*, &c.) Saith thus, “ Though these Words of
“ our Saviour, of *telling the Church*, may
“ perhaps not be so strictly applica-
“ ble to this Matter in their primary
“ Sense as our Saviour first spoke them,
“ yet the Nature of Things, and the Pa-
“ rity of Reason may well lead us to con-
“ clude, That though these Words did
“ immediately relate to the Composing of
“ Private Differences, and of delating
“ intractable Persons to the Synagogues,
“ yet they may be well extended to all
“ those

"those Publick Offences which are Inju-
 "ries to the whole Body, and may be
 "now apply'd to the *Christian Church*, and
 "to the Pastors and Guides of it, though
 "they related to the Synagogue when
 "they were first spoken. I agree that the
 Words as spoken by our Lord, immediately
 relate to the composing of private Differen-
 ces, for nothing can be plainer, (to use the
 Bishop of *Sarum*'s own Words in another
 place) than that "Our Saviour was
 "speaking of such private Differences as
 "might arise among Men, and of the
 "practice of forgiving Injuries, and com-
 "posing their Differences. *If thy Brother*
 "*Sin against thee; First*, Private Endea-
 "vours were to be used; then the Inter-
 "position of Friends was to be tried;
 "and Finally, the Matter was to be re-
 "ferred to the Body, or Assembly to which
 "they belonged: And those who could
 "not be gained by such Methods, were
 "no more to be esteemed Brethren, but
 "were to be looked on as very bad Men,
 "like Heathens. But then I am not to grant
 that our Saviour sends his Disciples to the
 Synagogue, but to his own Church, and
 affirm this to be the ground of that course
 which appears to have been settled in the
 Church at *Corinth*, by the Blame St. Paul
 charges them with for *going to Law before*
Infidels,

P. 205.

Infidels; 1 Cor. 6. 1, 2. For how should he blame them for that which they had not had some Order before not to do? What made them blame-worthy in this case, **must** be their having knowledge that their **Differences** ought to be ended within themselves, by those who were appointed to judge thereof within their own Body. It is indeed true that the *Jews*, in their **Dissentions**, had a Jurisdiction to this purpose in their Synagogues, and 'tis not unlikely that *putting out of the Synagogue* was the Punishment by which they enforced the Sentences of this kind; to the end that their Causes might not be carry'd always to the Courts of the Heathen, among whom they lived; as a scattered People, without Civil Power, lest God's Name should be Blasphemed from, and the *Gentiles* Scandalized at their Differences. Now be it always allowed, that for the same causes, our Lord (being willing also to follow the Example of the Synagogue) here estateth the same Power on his Church; it shall not thence follow, that our Lord sent his Disciples and Followers to the *Jewish Synagogue*, but to their own Church, *i. e.* to the Assembly of *Christians*, to the Body or Assembly to which they belonged being now his Disciples. And that the Disciples should thus understand

stand our Lord, we have reason to think, he having said to *Peter* before, *upon this Rock will I Build my Church*, wherein he could not be understood of Building the *Synagogue*, which *Moses* had Built so long before, but must be understood, as purposing to Build a Church of his own; and consequently, to direct his Disciples to refer their Matters to this his Church. And the Order we find afterwards taken for a Report accordingly, is yet a more sure Evidence of his being thus understood. And this being said, it is indeed *Parity of Reason* that must lead us to conclude, That the Church of Christ having Power to call Men to account for these Matters, may much more call them to an account for such their deeds as shall be notorious Violations of the Christianity they have Professed; yet not Parity of Reason alone from this Scripture, but from this Scripture considered together with the Practice of the Church, calling these things to account at all times thereupon. And as the Bishop saith, that those who refused to hear the Church, *Page 205.* " might, upon such refractoriness be *Ex-*
" *communicated*, and Prosecuted afterwards
" in Temporal Courts, since they had by
" their Perverseness forfeited all sort of
" Right to that Tenderness and Charity
" that

“ that is due to true Christians. I say the same, but not in the sense of some, who have said that Excommunication was no other than an allowance to Sue such a one in the Heathen Courts: But that it was indeed in effect Lawful to Sue such a one in the Heathen Courts, 'as being no longer a Christian; his Excommunication at the same time having a much worse Effect, as to the state of his Soul, in his being cut off from the Church, and thereby from the Right which Christians have to God's Promises. And I say also farther, That, as in this place our Lord gave his Church Power to *Excommunicate* those who would not stand to the Sentence of the Church in their particular Differences; much more has the Church hereby power to Excommunicate those who violate the Christianity which they have Professed, by Sins of a deeper guilt, according to what hath been practised by the Church in all Ages. And thus the Inference that I build upon parity of Reason, and the nature of Things, I think not to be by much so Remote as that the Bishop leaves us to make from the Power and Practice of the Synagogue, but to stand upon much firmer ground, as supposing an Authority Established by Christ in the Church it self, for the foundation of what may appear done by the Church in virtue of that Authority. Again

Exposit.
39 Art.
Pag. 274,
275, 276.

obliging the Ministers of Christ's Church not to pretend of themselves to an absolute Power of retaining and remitting Sins ; but to act with an Eye having regard to those Conditions in all they shall do of this nature. But when after this the *Exposition* comes to say, " Thus we think " we are fully justified by saying, That by " these words our Saviour did indeed fully " empower his Apostles to publish his " Gospel to the World, and to declare the " Terms of Salvation, and of obtaining " the Pardon of Sin, in which they were " to be Infallibly assisted, so that they " could not err in discharging their Com- " mission ; and the Terms of the Cove- " nant of Grace being thus settled by " them, all who were to succeed them, " were also empowered to go on with the " Publication of this Pardon ; so that " whatsoever they declared in the Name " of God, conform to the Tenor of that " which the Apostles were to settle , " should be always made good. We do " also acknowledge that the Pastors of " the Church have in the way of Censure " and Government, a Ministerial Autho- " rity to remit or to retain Sins, as they are " *matters of scandal or offence : though that* " *indeed does not seem to be the meaning of* " *those words of our Saviour ; and there-* " fore

“ fore we think that the Power of Par-
“ doning is only Declaratory ; so that all
“ the Exercises of it are then only Effectual,
“ when the Declarations of the Pardon
“ are made conform to the conditions of
“ the Gospel. I cannot by any means, be
of Opinion, that the *Bishop of Sarum* ought
to have said or intimated as concerning
the Sense of the *Church of England* about
this matter ; That this supposeth, that by
these words, *Whosoever Sins ye remit, &c.*
our Saviour only did impower his Apostles
to publish his Gospel, and to declare the
Terms of Pardon and Salvation ; and the
Terms being by them settled, did herein
impower their Successors to go on with
the Publication of this Pardon, and what-
soever they declared in the Name of God
conform to the Tenor of the Terms thus
settled should be made good. For though
this be indeed all true ; and probably also
implied in those words of our Saviour :
Yet it is not to be thought that a Church
claiming the Power of Excommunication,
and a Right of remitting and retaining
Sins Authoritatively, should understand
our Saviour not to mean or intend the
giving an Authority for such Purpose in
these words. On the contrary, in proof
that the *Church of England* understandeth
those words of our Saviour to be the foun-

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dation

dation of a Ministerial Authority, for the
 remitting and retaining Sins, I offer her
 own words in the *Ordination of Priests*.
 " Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office
 " and Work of a Priest in the Church of
 " God, &c. *Whose Sins thou dost forgive,*
 " *they are forgiven, and whose Sins thou*
 " *dost retain, they are retained.* And be
 " thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of
 " God and of his Holy Sacraments; in
 " the Name of the Father, and of the
 " Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Wherein
 from its having applied these words of our
 Saviour, as giving Authority, and Com-
 missioning for the Office and Work of a
 Priest; and immediately subjoining a
 charge concerning the particulars of this
 Office to him that had this committed to
 him; *To be a faithful Dispenser of the word*
of God, and of his Holy Sacraments; it ap-
 peareth, that as the Church of *England*
 understood these words of our Lord, to
 have given Authority for the dispensing of
his word, and preaching of his Gospel; so it
 understands them also as authorizing the
 Dispensation of the *Holy Sacraments*: The
 faithful dispensing of which shall ever be
 understood to imply, the withholding of
 the Sacraments, and therein withholding
 the hopes of God's Mercy and Pardon
 from Persons guilty of known Sins, in-
 consistent

consistent with Christianity; as well as the Ministration of the same, in assurance of God's Favour and Pardon of Sin, to those that live according to their Holy Profession. And the Dispensation of Discipline, for the remitting and retaining Sin being thus implied in the dispensing of the Sacraments, and the one supposed authorized by this Commission of our Saviour's as well as the other; we may well suppose to be the Reason of one of the Questions, demanded of him that desires the Office of a Priest; *viz.* "Will you
" give your faithful diligence always, to
" to Minister the *Doctrine* and *Sacraments*,
" and the *Discipline of Christ* as the Lord
" hath commanded? And whereas the *Bishop of Sarum* speaking seemingly on the behalf, and in the name of the Church of *England*, saith, "We acknowledge that
" the Pastors of the Church have in the
" way of Censure or Government, a Ministerial Authority to remit, or to retain Sins, as they are matters of scandal or offence; though that indeed does
" not seem to be the meaning of these
" words of our Saviour. I do not think it ought to have been said, that (holding the Opinion the Church of *England* holds about the matter) we acknowledge that Pastors have in the way of Censure and

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Government a Ministerial Authority to remit or to retain Sins ; meaning this only as they are matters of *scandal* and *offence* : much less in the Sense intimated by the Bishop, *Pag.* 274. where he says, “ We
 “ (meaning the Church) as a Body that
 “ may be offended with the Sins of others,
 “ forgive the Scandals committed against
 “ the Church. And again, “ We as the
 “ Officers of the Church, authorized for
 “ that End, do forgive all the Offences
 “ and Scandals committed by them against
 “ the whole Body. This would intimate the Authority of the Church to have an hand in the remitting and retaining Sins, no otherwise than as it may forgive the Offence and Scandal as to its self, not the Sin as to God. I think the Bishop may say truly of this, *that it seemeth not to be the meaning of our Saviour's words, Whosoever Sins ye remit, &c.* to give foundation to such an Authority. For what the breathing on his Apostles, and giving them the Holy Ghost, to give them thereby an Authority for such a purpose should mean, will be hard to shew. But taking the Authority of the Church as it is, and hath been always thought to be, a Power of remitting or retaining Sins ; taking away the guilt of them as to God, or leaving them to his Punishment ; there shall be
 need

need of the *Holy Ghost*, as well to evidence this Authority to be from God, as to direct them that have the Ministry of this Authority to do it aright, and to bring it to effect. And there shall be reason to think that these words of our Saviour are a warrant to that Authority in his Church, which acteth under God to this purpose, and were by him designed to be so: Especially seeing that this Act of his Church doth really more to the immediate purpose of remitting and retaining Sins, than any other Act of its Ministry: For the Preaching of the Gospel, indeed acquainteth Men upon what Conditions God's Pardon is to be had; but this engageth them in the course that obtaineth it. But to look somewhat more into the Bishop's Notion of the Church's remitting Sins, as matter of scandal and offence, supposing it to call Offenders to account, for satisfaction to its self, in respect of the offence, and remitting Sin, as forgiving the offence as to it self, not the Sin as to God: The Notion is new and singular, and I can see little or no ground to think that the Church ever pretended her Ministry to this purpose, or authorized Persons to forgive after such a manner, in the name of the Body. That the Church as a Body is concerned to forgive Scandals,

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after

after the manner that particular Persons **are** to forgive their Brethrens Trespasses ; or that for Peace and Quiet of Conscience sake, a Sinner is obliged to seek Pardon from the Church, as a Body offended, as a Man is to seek Reconciliation with his injured Brother, I am yet to learn. And if it should be thus, it would afford a much better Argument for the necessity of confessing Sins to the Church, than any that I have known made use of by those that dispute for it on behalf of the *Church of Rome*. It is indeed true, that the Church receiveth offence from all visible Sins. But how differeth that from what every Man receiveth, when he seeth his Brother Sin against God ? What meaneth then the Church's formal Pardon in such case ? Indeed as the Church is a Body, and hath in charge the Government of its Members in Christianity, it is concerned to remove scandals from the Body, by removing scandalous Persons from the Society ; and may require to be satisfied of a more Christian behaviour in offenders for the future, or otherwise not allow them to continue in the Society. But to require satisfaction from offenders, as a Man requireth satisfaction for injuries done him, was never the Reason of Penance in the Church of Christ ; nor doth the Church pretend to remit

remit Sins, by giving its own Pardon, but by assuring God's, Accordingly the Absolution the Church of *England* giveth to dying Penitents, tendeth to assure the Mercy of God, for the forgiveness of their offences against him; but pretendeth not this Mercy to follow from any forgiveness, which the Church as a Body offended can or doth give them; but as her Prayers may prevail with Christ, who hath left Power to his Church to Absolve all Sinners who truly Repent; and as having a Ministerial Power trusted with it by God, to assure his Mercy to such as it can presume to be truly Penitent; it thereupon assureth it to them, upon the ground it hath to presume of their Repentance. The Sense of our Church also, as concerning the End of Discipline, appeareth in the Preface to the *Communion*, where it saith it was anciently used; *That the Souls of such as were put to Penance might be saved in the day of the Lord, and that others admonished by their Example might be afraid to offend.* In short, 'tis undeniable that the Authority given the Church for Government, was in the design of Christ, a means of Salvation, as much as any other part of the Ministry committed to it, and consequently what the Church ought to seek by its Discipline, is the *saving of Souls from*

See the Absolution in Visitation of the Sick.

from Death: And if the scandal of bad example be thereby taken away from the Body of Christians, as it will be by the Removal of scandalous Persons from the Society; or by procuring their amendment (for then the scandal that may be cast upon it from without is prevented, and the offence within ceaseth) this is accidental, and not to be accounted as the End of the Church's Ministry, being the least considerable part of the aim in it. Whosoever will look into the way and method of the Antient Church, in putting Sinners under Penance, and releasing them from it; or into the mention which Ecclesiastical Writers make of the practice of Penance, and nature of it, shall be sure to find the Church in this work of her Ministry, not to have gone about to oblige offenders to ask Pardon of the Body, nor to have offered them Pardon as of and from it self; but to have laboured always by Exhortations, by Reproofs, and by Censures to bring offenders to the sight and acknowledgment of their Faults; constraining them to a due course of Humiliation, for procuring forgiveness of God: Shall find also the Penitents submitting to go through the course of Humiliation, enjoined them in hope of God's forgiveness; and soliciting the Church to interceed

interceed with God on their behalf, and the Prayers of the Church allowed and granted them for that purpose, during the Time of their Penance: Shall find likewise the Penitential Acts enjoined, to be such Acts of Humiliation, Mortification, and self-denial, as could be thought most effectual to humble the Sinner in respect of his Sins; to work in him a Godly sorrow, and to work him off from the Love of Sin, or most likely to prevail with God for Mercy; on which account works of Charity were sometimes prescribed, in hope that by means of such works, ever acceptable with God, they might sooner obtain Mercy. It shall be found also that the course of Penance prescribed was for a longer or shorter Time, as Mens Crimes and Guilt were thought to be greater or less; from which the Church reasonably concluded a greater or less difficulty to obtain Reconciliation with God, and the Recovery of his Favour: And likewise that when the Church was satisfied of the Sinner's Repentance, it admitted him to the Sacraments and Privileges of God's Church; and therein assured his hopes as touching God's Mercy and Pardon. In all which it appears that the Great concern of the Church, is for the Sinner's Soul, in this its Ministry, and that

that herein the Church may be truly **said** to act according to, and to fulfil the **Effect** of our Saviour's Commission, in *remitting Sins*, as it Ministreth the means of forgiveness; and not only teacheth **the** course Men are to hold in seeking Pardon, but prescribeth it, and engageth them **in** it, and so helpeth them forward in the course that they obtain it. But nevertheless after all, this is not forgiving Sins as God forgiveth them, nor doth it suppose it to be in the Church to Pardon Sin, without that disposition, which in the Gospel qualifyeth a Man for it; so that indeed, the Exercise of this Ministry in the Church (as the Bishop saith rightly) is then only effectual, when it is made *Conform to the Conditions of the Gospel*: and yet the Power of the Church in *remitting Sin* shall be more than *Declaratory*, as being *Ministerial*, having and acting with authority, in procuring Pardon by the means of Repentance, and in assuring the same.

And now I think my self to have fully vindicated the Scriptures hitherto cited, to their proper Sense, and so to be not only a good Foundation for an Authority in the Church, for the Ministering of Discipline, but an obligation also upon it to discharge this part of its Ministry.

Though

Though it has not been without concern, that I have held this debate with so Reverend a Prelate of our own Church, especially, because I may not hold him as an Enemy, but a Friend in the cause of Church-Discipline, which he hath argued much for in divers places of that his Book : Which nevertheless bearing the Title of an *Exposition* of the 39 Articles of the Church of *England*, should in that respect be thought to have delivered the Sense of our Church, concerning those Scriptures, when they fell under consideration in any of the Articles that relate to the Government, Authority or Discipline of the Church. And if there were Reason to think the Church understood them in the Sense of the Bishop ; I must not hope my Arguments should prevail with those that have share in the Ministry of the Church, to acknowledge themselves under any such obligation, to restore a Discipline therein, as I pretend them to be. This therefore, and my present undertaking, obliging me to seek beyond the usefulness and advantage of Discipline, a foundation for it in Scripture, (seeing that the Expediency thereof, or its Congruity to the Design of the Christian Religion, may not be looked on as sufficient of it self, to oblige the Church otherwise to restore it) have been the

the sole Motives prevailing with me to undertake to retrieve these Scriptures to the Sense, which in the Church of Christ they have generally been understood in, and which the Practice of the Apostles, and of the whole Church inferreth.

C H A P. III.

HAVING thus far shewed the Foundation of Ecclesiastical Power, and therein consequently of Discipline the chief Act thereof, to have been laid by our Lord Christ himself; 'twill be now requisite that we look into the Acts of the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord thereupon; and likewise what Scriptures we have to shew the Course and Order taken and settled by them, for the Government of the Church, and for Discipline therein.

Now though our Lord Christ himself, as hath been shewn, gave this Power and Authority to his Church for Government and Discipline therein; yet we must not expect to find the Exercise of it, whilst himself was upon Earth, his Church not being as yet Gathered. And for the same Reason the Acts of this Power, it is to be

be supposed were few, if any, for some time after the Apostles began their Preaching of the Gospel upon our Saviour's Ascension; for though they might understand our Lord to have given a power to his Church, and knew themselves entrusted with the discharge of it, yet they must also know their Commission could not take place until a Church in his Name were Gather'd and Form'd. The Apostles also and Disciples continued in the Synagogue with the *Jews* for a time, while there was hope of gaining these over to Christianity; in which space, though they had separate Meetings, for which they were to do as Christians, yet the Body of the Church not being as yet Formed, there could not much appear of the Method and Way of Government therein. There is also a Reason to be given why we have not many Instances in the Scriptures of the New Testament, of Offenders brought under Discipline in the Church, or Censures upon the Refractory that would not: which is this, That the *Christian* Religion was then New, and the Churches not well Settled, and withal, those that then became *Christians* could not well come to the Church, but with a Resolution to undergo the Cross, and suffer Persecution, (the Church then being Persecuted on every side

side, hated alike by *Jew and Gentile*) and such a Resolution, 'tis likely, would not soon depart from the *Christianity* it had undertaken to live after, as well as constantly to profess; and so the Offenders 'tis very probable were not many. Moreover, the Apostles had not only Power and Authority to Censure Transgressors, but an extraordinary power to punish Hypocrites, and such as were so wicked as to Despise God and his Church, and Disobey the Gospel of his Son, with Plagues, Diseases, and Death, as in the Case of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, so that in their time few Hypocrites durst offer themselves to become *Christians*; and the Professors of *Christianity*, it must be supposed had greater regard to live as their Holy Profession obliged them, in respect of the imminent danger, should they transgress, and not walk after the holy Commandment delivered unto them. According to what is said, *Acts* 5. 11. upon what befell *Ananias* and *Saphira*, that great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things. Moreover, neither may we expect in the Instances that are of this nature in the New Testament, an account at large of the Course and Order taken by the Apostles, concerning Government and Discipline in the Churches of their Planting,

ing, but only References therein to some Course and Order taken. For neither do we find the whole of the Christian Doctrine delivered together in any of these Scriptures, they being occasional Epistles sent to Churches that were before Instructed in Christianity, and had a Summary or Form of Doctrine delivered to them before, of which mention is often made, and frequent reference thereto had therein. And so the Order taken, and Course settled in the Churches about Government and Discipline, is not to be supposed expressed, but referred to as occasion was, from the matter and subject about which the Apostles had occasion to Write to the Churches. But nevertheless these References are as much an Evidence of an Order settled to this purpose, as if we had that Order itself before our Eyes. Because it could not be, that the Apostles could write to their Churches, and refer to such Order or Course if such had not been, or had not been also such as their Writings intimate them. So that what we may gather to have been part of such Orders from Intimations in the Apostles Writings referring thereto, we have consequently the same reason to believe, as if we had the Order extant in their Writings, and therein saw it to be part. For believing the Apostles

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stles Men of common Sense, and of some Integrity, it is not to be thought they should write of things that were not, as though they were; and especially supposing them assisted in their Writings by the Holy Ghost, it can no more be thought that they should give false Suggestions, or make false and wrong References, than that they should give us false relations, or unfaithful accounts of things.

But to the Scriptures that are for our Purpose. I have occasionally said before, that what St. Peter did in excluding *Simon Magus*, discovered a Counterfeit Christian from the benefit of Christianity, seems to be an Act of the Power of the Keys committed to him. For when he saith, *Acts 8. 21. Thou hast neither Part nor Lot in this Matter, &c.* it seems to be spoken with an Authority excluding him from all that *part* and *lot* that he might have had together with other Believers by his being Baptized, had he not given S. Peter cause to Judge of him, from the discovery of the thought of his wicked heart, That *he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*; and when immediately upon this Rebuke and Censure, he bids him *Repent of this his Wickedness, and pray. God if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven*, It may be understood indeed that he left him
to

to his liberty for this; but I should rather think that he left him to expect God's Judgment if he did it not: And the answer of Simon, *Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoke come upon me;* seems as though his fear of the consequences of S. Peter's Censure had driven him to seek to that Authority which had Pronounced so of him to intercede with God on his behalf, that the Evil might not come upon him. This therefore is very like to, if not the same with what was usually done in the Church, as to the Censure of Offenders, and putting them under a necessity of Repentance, if they would escape God's Judgments, who were thereupon driven by their fear, to seek God's Pardon, and to desire the Prayers of his Church to be Offered to God on their behalf, in commiseration and pity of their circumstances, as they lay under great guilt, and thereby were fallen under the dreadful expectation of the Wrath and Judgment of God. But let every one think of this as he pleaseth; it shall not be deny'd me, that as what St. Paul did in *delivering to Satan* the Incestuous Person at *Corinth* was an Act of this Power of the Keys; so what he there argueth with that Church concerning the Removal of that Person from among them,

supposeth and referreth to some Order known before unto, or settled before in that Church for the putting away from among them such wicked Persons. For what else meaneth that which he saith, *I verily as Verse 3. 4* absent in Body, but present in Spirit, have judged already as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed; In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my Spirit with the Power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus; but this, that he being no less careful for them and the concerns of their Church when absent, than when present, *that his care for them* *aCor. 7. 12* in the sight of God might appear, wrote to them about this matter, and judged concerning him that had done this wicked deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that 'twas meet when they were gathered together, to consult and consider the thought and judgment of his Spirit thereupon, the Offender should by them, and the Power which they had from our Lord Jesus Christ for this purpose, be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord, i. e. be Excommunicated and Removed from God's Church. For 'tis evident

dent that Excommunication was the thing which the Apostle signified by *delivering unto Satan*. For how could he mean other than what he finds fault had not been done, *the taking away from among them him that had done that deed*, and what he prescribes them by his Arguments to do, (not knowing as yet what Obedience they would yield to him in this matter); to *purge out the old Leaven*, and to *put away from among themselves that wicked Person*. He might indeed design to intimate, and does very probably express an extraordinary Effect that followed it in the Apostles time, to wit, That those which were put out of the Church became visibly subject to Satan, inflicting Plagues and Diseases on their Bodies which might reduce them to Repentance, which the Apostle calleth *the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be Saved in the Day of the Lord*. And there is reason to think that the Apostles had Power thus to Punish the Refractory, provided and given by God as the rest of his Miraculous Graces to evidence his Presence and Power in the Church. Nevertheless the *delivering to Satan* shall first mean, *the putting out of the Church*, before it signify the consequence thereof, and this especially because it shall be always a consequence, that whosoever

Verse 4.

Verse 2.

is put out of God's Church, shall fall under the Power of Satan as to his Soul, where it may be otherwise as to his Body; that is, supposing his being put out of the Church work no effect on him towards Repentance. And whereas we see the Judgment that S. Paul passed in the case was an act of Authority, being in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that, when he requireth them to Execute his Sentence, he maketh mention of their having also Power from our Lord Jesus Christ for that purpose; Let it be shewn what other Power the Apostle could have from our Lord Jesus Christ for this purpose, or what other at least the Church of Corinth could have for such purpose; or let the Power of the Keys given by Christ to his Church, be allowed to be the Power by which this Act was done by S. Paul, and enjoined by him upon the Church of Corinth to be fully executed. And again, when he layeth blame on the Corinthians, that they had not mourned to put away him that had done this Evil deed from among them; as no other ground of blame could lye against them in this respect, but some antecedent Order left with them to put away such Offenders from among them, which rendered them blameable, for that they had not done according to it: So what

what is said of their *not mourning to put away*, being easily understood if we call to mind the Solemnity of Excommunication in the Primitive Church (which was to put the Person out of the Church with mourning) but not intelligible otherwise; this Circumstance or Ceremony shall hereupon cause the *putting away* to be expounded, to signify *Excommunication*, as this Scripture shall again be a good Proof, that the Practice of Excommunication, as well as the Ceremony, had place in the Primitive Church, as being derived from the Apostles, who shall be acknowledged to have taken Order for the *Power of the Keys* to be executed in the Church, from the plain Reference which this Scripture hath to some such Order, and from the express mention therein of this Circumstance being part of it.

But we have more to our Purpose yet in this Chapter, when S. Paul tells the *Corinthians* that he had wrote to them in an *Verse 9. Epistle not to company with Fornicators*, and explains himself, That he meant not they should forbear the Company of *Gentiles* for such Sins; of whom better could not be expected; but if a Christian lived in any of these Heathen Vices, they should not keep company with such a one, no not to eat; much more should they be concerned

to remove such from the Church (for ~~this~~ if I mistake not, is the form and force of his Argument;) for neither himself nor they had *to do to judge them that are without*, therefore such they must leave to God to judge; but they *might judge*, they had Power of judging *those that are within*, and this obliged them *to put away from among them that wicked Person*. Here the case is plain, there is Power in the Church to judge and take away offenders; and this Power being committed to the Church, is argued by the Apostle to be an obligation upon the Church, to put away him that had done Evil.

I shall not go off from the Scripture in hand, until I have considered what the Bishop of *Sarum* has said concerning it, in his Exposition of the 33. *Article* of the Church of *England*, relating to Persons *Excommunicato*, viz. "That the Delivery unto *Satan* was visibly an Act of Miraculous Power lodged with the Apostles. That the Apostles never reckon this among the standing Functions of the Church, nor do they give any charge or directions about it; They used it themselves, and but seldom. That *S. Paul*, it's true, being carried by a just Zeal against the scandal which the Incestuous Person at *Corinth* had cast upon

Expositi-
on 39 Ar-
ticles, pag
306.

upon the Christian Religion, did ad-
 judge him to this severe degree of Cen-
 sure. But he judged it, and did only
 order the *Corinthians* to publish it, as
 coming from him with the Power of our
 Lord Jesus Christ; that so the Thing
 might become the more Publick, and
 that the Effects of it might be more
 Conspicuous. That the Primitive Church,
 which being nearest the Fountain, did
 best understand the nature of Church
 Power and the Effects of her Censures,
 thought of nothing in this Matter, but
 of denying to suffer Apostates, or ra-
 ther scandalous Persons to mix with the
 rest in the Sacraments, or in the other
 parts of Worship, &c. Which agrees
 well with the Nature, and the Ends of
 Church-Power, which was given for
 Edification, and not for Destruction, &c.
 Whereas the other looks like a Power
 that designs Destruction, rather than Edi-
 fication, &c. I am not to say, that the
 Bishop had not cause to find fault with
 some that are over hasty to denounce Ana-
 themas, against all that differ in Opinion
 from them in Doctrinal Points; but that
 to shew or restrain the Abuse of Church-
 Power in such Proceedings, he ought not
 to have used such an Argument as this,
 which weakens the Foundation of the due
 Power

Power of the Church. I must therefore of necessity dissent from the Bishop in this that he suggests, viz. That the *Delivery unto Satan* was visibly an Act of *Miraculous Power* lodged in the Apostles, such an Act of *Apostolical Authority*, as is not to be made a *Precedent* for the standing Practice of the Church. For if the Bishop be in the right in this suggestion, I must be in the wrong, who have given this for an Instance of the *Power of the Keys* lost by Christ with his Church, and for a *Precedent* to the Church to act upon that Power. What then are his Arguments? "The Apostles (he saith) as they struck some blind or dead, so had an Authority of letting loose Evil Spirits on some, to haunt and terrifie, or to punish and plague them, &c. but they never reckon this among the standing Functions of the Church, nor give any charge or directions about it: They used it themselves, and but seldom. To which I answer, If it be here meant, that the Apostles had Power and Authority to let loose Evil Spirits upon Sinners, to plague and punish them, and that they did it, otherwise than as this was the Consequence of their Censures, which removed such out of the Church; it is a Supposition without Proof, of which I may say indeed with the

the *Exposition*, that the Apostles never reckoned this among the *standing Functions* of the Church, nor gave charge or directions about it; but cannot say as the *Exposition* does, *That they used it, and but seldom*; being yet to learn that the Apostles ever made use of such a Power. Which nevertheless should it be proved to have been, will be nothing to the purpose! For S. Paul's Act in *delivering to Satan*, was most certainly a *Spiritual Censure* passed by himself, because the Church of Corinth had neglected to do their Duty in the case, for which neglect he highly blames them, and judges the offender himself, because they had not judged him: And though the blame he lays on them be for not *taking away* from among them him that had done the Evil deed, and himself judgeth that he be *delivered to Satan*; yet is there Reason to think that he meant the same thing, and did no other than what he blameth them for not having done: For having charged it upon them to execute his Censure, not as yet knowing what Obedience they would yeild to him therein, he presseth them by several Arguments to it, and at last concludes with this; *Therefore put away from among your selves that wicked Person*: i. e. That they should now therefore do that in executing his Sentence,

tence, which they ought to have done of
 themselves before. But now if it be meant
 in the *Exposition*, That the *Putting out of*
the Church, which was a Spiritual Cen-
 sure, had also another Effect in the time
 of the Apostles, as there did some Visible
 or Corporal vexation of such Persons by
 Evil Spirits ensue; this is a Conjecture
 that seemeth to have some ground, and
 therefore as I have allowed it before, so
 I here own it for an Effect of *Miraculous*
Power granted among others, by God for
 the first confirmation of the Gospel, and
 for evidence of his Presence and Power in
 the Church, as well as for enforcing the
 Ministry of the Church to its intended
 Purposes. I therefore likewise acknow-
 ledge, that the Apostles do not assure this
 Effect to the Spiritual Censures of the
 Church in all times, neither have they
 given Directions to the Church to pretend
 to a Power for such Purpose, or to use its
 Authority in any case, in expectation of
 any such Event. But then I cannot say,
 That the Apostles *used this* and *but seldom*;
 forasmuch, as it appears not to me, that
 they put out of the Church sometimes
 with purpose that this Effect should fol-
 low, and sometimes not; but only that
 this Effect followed in as many cases as it
 pleased God, to shew his giving effect to
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the Ministry of his Church, by inflicting this Extraordinary Punishment. And this Effect having followed as often and as long as God thought fit, to prevent Mens having his Institutions in Contempt; it ceased afterwards when the Divine Wisdom thought enough done to convince the World, that God would give Power and Efficacy to the Ministry of his Church, sufficient to accomplish the Ends whereunto it was designed. Be it allowed therefore, that this Extraordinary Effect following the Spiritual Censures of the Apostles was from a *Miraculous Power*; it shall not in any wise follow, hereupon, that *S. Paul's Act in delivering to Satan the Incestuous Person at Corinth*, was an Act of *Miraculous Power*, not to be made a President for the Practice of the Church: For as it was a Censure that put the Offender out of the Church, it shall be a President for the Church of God always to follow; and though the Church may not have sufficient ground, thence to expect that every Person thus put out shall be plagued by some *Evil Spirit*, yet shall this very Effect following upon the Apostle's Act, confirm the Faith of the Church in the Execution of its Ministry; That the Sentence of the Church passed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and executed as
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by his Power, so according to his Will shall have its Effect; because it is ~~He~~ who having shewn his Power by visible Effects, shall be thought able to work his Purposes in a way not visible. Besides it shall not be denied me, that the Censure that ~~putteth~~ out of the Church is properly a *Delivering to Satan*, if visible Vexation of such Persons by Evil Spirits never did ensue, in respect of other and worse Effects, which may justly, and are always to be expected and feared, by such as are duly and regularly cast out of the Church of God by that Censure, *viz.* Satan's having Power over their Souls, to lead them Captive to Sin at his Will, and to hold them as a sure Possession to himself: Which yeilds but too great a Reason, why he may be said to be *delivered to Satan*, who is put out of the Church. What is said in the *Exposition*, therefore hath proved nothing hitherto to the contrary, but that *S. Paul's Act* may be a President for the Church to act upon the *Power of the Keys*, and to *put away and deliver to Satan by putting away* Scandalous and Refractory Sinners. And what it saith of the Apostles not reckoning this among the *standing functions* of the Church, nor giving directions about it, is confuted by this very Act of the Apostle, and the Circumstances

circumstances thereof; for as much as there
 must have been some antecedent Order,
 or Instructions to the Church of *Corinth*,
 for the thus censuring Offenders; other-
 wise, Why are they blamed? and after
 S. Paul had passed the Sentence himself,
 because they had not done it as they ought,
 we see he giveth charge about it, in charg-
 ing them to execute it; and in persisting
 still to require of them, that they put a-
 way from among them that wicked Person,
 1 Cor. 5. 13. But the *Exposition* saith of
 S. Paul's adjudging the Offender to this
 severe degree of Censure. " That he judg-
 ed it, and did only order the *Corinthians*
 " to publish it, as coming from him with
 " Power from our Lord Jesus Christ: That
 " so the Thing might become the more
 " Publick, and that the Effects of it might
 " be the more Conspicuous. Intimating
 that the Sentence was an *Apostolical* Act,
 such as the *Corinthians* had not Power to
 judge themselves, and which also they were
 the Apostle's Instruments to publish only,
 as coming from him with the Power of
 our Lord Jesus Christ; and that S. Paul
 made use of them therein, not for any
 thing they had to do in the matter, but
 only that the Thing might thereby be
 made more Publick, and the Effects more
 Conspicuous. Which is all mistake: For
 if

- if the Church of Corinth had not Power from our Lord Jesus Christ to put away him that had done this Deed, Why are they blamed? And what S. Paul did in judging concerning him that had done this Deed, he saith was
- 1 Cor. 5. 4. *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, therein intimating his own Act to be by Power from him; when afterwards he requires of them to execute it, when they were gathered together and his Spirit, with the Power of our Lord Jesus Christ, he seems rather to tell them that they had Power from Christ of themselves, to put the Sentence in Execution, than that he now gave them a Power for it; as appears most plainly,*
- V. 12. *when he saith afterwards, Do not ye judge them that are within? Therein demanding whether they did not understand their Power, and requiring them immediately to act upon it, and put away from among them that wicked Person. And to say,*
- V. 13. *Therefore that S. Paul made use of them in this case, only that the Thing might be the more Publick, and the Effects more Conspicuous, is speaking without Book; there appearing nothing from the Text of such purpose in S. Paul, no Conspicuous Effects of this Act in any visible Punishment of the Offender remembred, to give ground for this conjecture. I may certainly upon much better grounds offer a*
- conjecture,

Conjecture, That the Apostle made use of them to execute this his Sentence, that their having an hand therein might take away the Sin and Scandal, that lay upon the Church of *Corinth*, or those that were concerned by their Office at least to act for that Church, for not having done it before: or because the Sentence being the putting away the Offender out of the Church, it could not take place without them, who were the Assembly from which he was to be removed (upon which ground the People always had an Interest and concern in such Censures in the Primitive Times, these and indeed all Publick Acts of the Church passing at the Publick Assemblies of the same). But the *Exposition* saith further; "The Primitive Church, that being nearest the Fountain, did best understand the Nature of Church Power, and the Effects of the same, thought of nothing in this matter, but of denying Apostates, or rather Scandalous Persons to mix with the rest in the Sacrament, or in the other parts of Worship. If this be intended to suggest, that the Primitive Church thought that which S. Paul did in this case, to be an Act of Apostolical Power, such as was not to be a Precedent for the Church to follow in its Censures."

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The quite contrary is the Truth; ~~of which~~ we have an undeniable Evidence, in the Dispute which *Tertullian* had with the Church in his time, for admitting Adulterers to Penance, who had this very Scripture alledged against him on behalf of the Church, that what was done was agreeable to the Precedent *S. Paul* had set the Church, in the case of this Incestuous Person at *Corinth*; who being put out of the Church by *S. Paul's* Order in this place, was readmitted by his Indulgence, *2 Cor.* 2. 7. How easie had it been for *Tertullian* to say, That there was nothing of Penance, nothing of Excommunication in this Act of *S. Paul's* delivering the Incestuous Person to *Satan*, or that what he did both in putting away, and in readmitting him to the Church, was an Act of Apostolical Authority, not to be a Precedent to the Church to do the like? But this he could not say, knowing the Sense of the whole Church against him in it, and being himself satisfied that the Church would be justifiable in following the Example. He therefore deviseth this Answer, That it is not the same case which is spoken of in both Epistles; the Man put out of the Church by the Apostle's Order, *1 Cor.* 5. was not the same that was readmitted and restored by his Indulgence, *2 Cor.* 2. 7.

An

Tertullian
de Pudici-
tia, cap. 12,
13.

An answer plainly shewing his Sense, and that of the Church in his time to have been this, That it would be a sufficient justification of the Church's Proceedings, as well in passing its Censures, as in remitting them to have followed this Precedent of *S. Paul*, in what could be made appear to have been done by him in the present case. Which being so clear an Evidence of the Sense of the Primitive Church that nothing can be more, I may advance it here, as greatly for my purpose, to prove that I have rightly applied this Scripture, and have not been mistaken, neither in giving the Fact for an Instance of the *Power of the Keys*, nor in insisting upon the Act of *S. Paul*, to be a Precedent for the Church to act upon that Power in all times: The Primitive Church that best understood the Nature of Church Power, and the Effects of such Censures, making this a Precedent to it self, for what it did by Power from our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Censure of Offenders, and in the Relaxation of those Censures. And thus it appearing that the Primitive Church so thought of *S. Paul's Act*, as to make it a Precedent for it self; I need not allow it to be fit for me to dispute with the *Exposition*, whether the Primitive Church thought of *delivering to Satan* by its Cen-

sures. For how could it think of following the Precedent, but by thinking to do the same thing? But perhaps I shall have it thrown overthwart me, that the Primitive Church must then have thought of some visible Punishment by Evil Spirits, ensuing upon its Censures, to such as were thereby put out of the Church, because this Effect followed on the Apostle's Censure. But I can easily get clear of this Objection, by saying this which no Man shall easily disprove, *viz.* That the Primitive Church being nearest the time of the Apostles, knew best, what in any of their Acts was the Effect of *Miraculous Power* and what not; what the Difference was between the Ministers of the Church acting upon the Power of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Things belonging to the Church's Ministry, and the Apostles during the same in their own Persons: and whatsoever extraordinary Effects appeared in what the Apostles acted thereupon, it did not expect to follow upon the ordinary Ministers of the Church doing them: but yet understood at the same time how to make use of those extraordinary Effects to confirm the Faith of the Church, that God who had thus visibly shewn his Power to be with the Church in what the Apostles did, was able to give Effect to the Acts of his

his Church in the ordinary way, and would give them Effect accordingly. Had not the Primitive Church thus understood to distinguish the Effects of *Extraordinary Power*, in Acts done by the Apostles from the ordinary Ministration, and the Effects following the same; I do not see how the Church could have thought of retaining upon the Apostles practice any, almost of those things that have been retained, as standing Functions and Ordinances in the Church, such as *Imposition of Hands in Confirmation, Ordination of Ministers, Councils and Synods, even Preaching the Word and Baptism* it self; there being no one of these but what extraordinary Effects followed in the time of the Apostles, especially when they performed any of them in their own Persons: yet those the Church hath retained and pretendeth to follow the Apostles in, with Confidence that the same Spiritual Effects shall follow to the Church in the use of them, as did in the Apostles use thereof; these being necessary for the Church to receive from God by some means or other in all Times, and therefore to be expected in the use of these means which the Apostles used on the behalf of God's Church to obtain them, and by which they were obtained through God's Grace and Goodness: Why then should it

Acts 19 5.

& 6

2 Tim. 1.

6

Acts 15.

28.

Acts 10.

44

Acts 8. 15.

be imagined that the Primitive Church thought not of the same Spiritual Effect from its Censure putting Scandalous Offenders out of the Church, which the Apostle had intimated to be the consequence of his doing it, the falling under the Power of Satan in a Spiritual Sense being the too sure Consequent of being put out of the Church of God at all times? And if there were nothing of this Evidence that I have been arguing from, I should rather take the Sense of the Primitive Church from what the *Homily* of our Church of England hath spoken of it, than from the Bishop of *Sarum's* Word alone. Now that speaking of Persons Excommunicate, saith thus, "They that were so justly Excommunicate and Banished, as it were from the House of the Lord, were taken (as they be indeed) for Men divided and separated from Christ's Church and in most dangerous estate, yea, as St. Paul saith, even given unto Satan, the Devil for a time, and their Company was shunned and avoided of all Godly Men and Women, until such time as they by Repentance and Publick Penance were Reconciled. So horrible a thing was it to be shut out of the Church and House of the Lord in those days when Religion was most Pure, and nothing so Corrupt as it hath been of

Homily of
the right
Use of the
Church,
Part. 2.

of late days, Where observe also, the difference between the Opinion of the Bishop of *Sarum* (who offereth it as an Argument that the Primitive Church meant not the delivering to Satan by its Censure, That it thought nothing in this matter but of denying to suffer Scandalous Persons to mix with the rest in the Sacrament, and in other parts of the Worship,) and the Sense of the Church of England, which reckoneth it as an Effect of that Discipline, (which would not suffer open Offenders once to enter into the House of the Lord, nor to be admitted to Common-Prayer and the use of the Sacraments with other true Christians) that such Persons by being excluded from the Sacraments and the other parts of Worship, were even given unto Satan. And *Tertullian* (who shall be allowed to speak the Sense of the Primitive Church in what he speaks of the general Practice thereof) saith the same in effect, when speaking of the Exhortations, the Reproofs and Censures of the Church, (which were the Methods of Primitive Discipline,) He saith *Summum futuri judicii præjudicium est, si quis ita deliquerit, ut à Communicatione Orationis & Conventus & omnis Sancti commercii relegatur.* That if any one so Offended as to be confined from Prayers, and from the Publick Assembly, and debarred

Tertullian
Apolog.
Cap. 39.

from *all Communion in Holy Things*, The Judgment of the Church against such an Offender was as the greatest Judgment before-hand to the Judgment to come, that is to say, it was like a *President* or *Ruled Case*, (which the word *Præjudicium* is many times used to signify) to God's future Judgment for the excluding such wicked ones from his Presence, and from his Heavenly Kingdom. What could be said more to express the dangerous estate of such as were shut out from the House of God, and excluded the Assemblies for his Worship? And indeed by excluding from the Sacrament, and from the Assemblies for God's Worship; what can the Church at any time mean, but that the Persons debarred from these, are barred from any Interest in God's Grace or Mercy, and being destitute of these, are they not really exposed to *Satan*, who goeth about as a *Roaring Lion seeking whom he may Devour*? But the *Exposition* says, "That the Primitive Church Admitted Sinners upon the profession of their Repentance, by an Imposition of Hands to share in some parts of the Worship, wherein they stood by themselves, and at a distance from the rest: And when they had passed through several degrees in that state of Mourning, they were by steps received back

“ back again to the Communion of the
 “ Church. And this (it saith), agrees
 “ well with the Nature and Ends of Church
 “ Power, which was given for *Edification*,
 “ and not for *Destruction*, and is suitable to
 “ the designs of the Gospel, for preserving
 “ the Society pure, and for reclaiming
 “ those who are otherwise like to be car-
 “ ried away by the *Devil in his Snare*.

This is a true Account, so far as it is an
 Account of the Methods of Primitive Dis-
 cipline, and a just Recognition of the sui-
 tableness to the design, and of its effica-
 cy to the Ends of Christianity. But the
Exposition hath herein only given us an
 Account of the Church's dealing with
Penitents, that is to say, with those that
 were admitted to Penance, and to the
 Prayers of the Church for their Reconci-
 liation with God. We are not told what the
 Method was, that the Church took with
 Refractory Sinners whom it could not
 bring to Submit to the course of Penance,
 nor with those that were guilty of so
 gross Sins that the Church thought not fit
 to admit them to the course of Penance
 though they should desire it, until after
 some time at least. Now these the Cen-
 sure of the Church removed *non modo à*
limine, sed ab omni Ecclesiæ testō, as *Tertulli-*
an's Expression is, alluding to the several
 stations

stations or places appointed for Penitents in the Church, whereas the *Excommunicate* were not allowed to come *within it*. Such were utterly excluded the House of God, or the place of Assembly for his Worship, to denote their being put out of the Church of God; *i. e.* from all Fellowship with his Saints and Servants, and from all part in the Interest which these have in God's Grace and Mercy: that is, in effect they were delivered to *Satan*, those who are destitute of God's Grace and Mercy, being under the Power of that Evil One that Ruleth in the Children of Disobedience, and dooiveth them to go in the way of Wickedness, until they fall into Destruction. And indeed even this Act of Discipline, as it appertaineth to the Authority which the Lord hath given to his Church, so serveth it to the intent for which our Lord gave that Authority, *i. e.* for *Edification* and not for *Destruction*. The Apostle's Act in *delivering to Satan*, tho' understood to intend some immediate and visible Punishment to him that was Excommunicated by it, let it be even this, that as the Holy Ghost was poured out on all Christians, so he that was thus put away from amongst them should be Possessed or Haunted with an Evil Spirit, nevertheless had this intent in the *Destruction*

2 Cor. 10. 8

on

of the Flesh, or Punishment of the Body, that the Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus. As the same is now understood by the Church to be a Spiritual Censure, and used only to Spiritual Purposes, it cannot but be less liable (if rightly understood) to the Objection of its not tending to Edification but Destruction. It apparently tendeth to the Edification of the Church in General, to the making and preserving it a Glorious Church; Pure, Holy, and without Blemish, to the Building it up to be a Spiritual House, an Holy Priesthood to Offer up Spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, whilst it putteth away that which defileth, every one that worketh wickedness and Abomination: Yea it designeth not the Destruction or Damnation of the Sinner whom it putteth out of the Church and delivereth to Satan, but that he may be Instructed to Repentance and Righteousness, and his Soul delivered out of the hands of that Enemy which would betray it to everlasting Destruction. Therefore is the vulgar prejudice against this Act of Discipline altogether unwarrantable, which because it is expressed by delivering to Satan, esteemeth it unbecoming the Ministers of Christ, who should be concerned in the Saving of Mens Souls, but not in the Damning of them. Designing Men that have form'd this Prejudice in the Minds of

of simple Christians, must have conceal'd the truth, which is this, The Sins of such as this Act of Discipline putteth out of the Church hath first brought them into the Snare of the Devil and subjected them to his Power, before the Church judgeth to put away and *deliver them to Satan*; and this the Church also judgeth with intent to Rescue them as a Prey out of the Teeth of the Dragon that devoureth Souls; it putteth them into imminent danger, not that they should be swallowed up in it, but that they may become sensible of their dangerous estate, and that the apprehensions of Terror and a fearful looking for of Judgment *might warn them to flee from the Wrath to come*, whilst there is yet some possibility of their Escape through God's extraordinary Mercy, if they will fly to that Refuge.

I should not have dwelt so long upon this Argument, but that I propos'd some advantages to my purpose from it, which I think my self to have also gained; namely, an Evidence of the Apostles taking Order with the Churches of their Planting, for the Exercise of that Power which Christ gave to his Church for the Government thereof in Righteousness, and for the Establishment of a Discipline therein for this purpose, which the reference of
- this

this Scripture to some such Order that must have been taken by St. Paul with the Church of *Corinth*, hath cleared: The Sense also of the Primitive Church understanding this Scripture as by me it is understood, to afford an Instance of the *Power of the Keys*, and to yield a Precedent to the Church to Act upon this Power in all times: Likewise a Proof that the Apostle's Act of *delivering to Satan* was (setting aside what extraordinary Effect might happen, if it pleased God to shew his Power with his Church in some visible Punishment) no other than the *Putting out of the Church*; from which, whosoever was put away, fell into Satan's Power, into the Snare of the Deceiver, and into the Power of the Destroyer of Souls. And as by *delivering to Satan* is meant (as shall be shewn) the *Putting out of the Church*, of which no doubt can remain to him that as a Christian hath reason to think, that whosoever is not in the Church is in the Power of Satan, hereby is it gained, that another Passage of Scripture, *1 Tim. I. 20*. Where St. Paul saith that he had delivered *Hymenæus and Philetus unto Satan, that they might learn not to Blaspheme*, shall be also understood to be another Instance of the Apostle's Acting upon the *Power of the Keys*, and to imply a Discipline in the Churches

Churches of his Planting; For wheresoever this last degree of Censure appeareth, it shall infer the other methods of Discipline that appear in the Practice of the Church to have been in use also, and that this Censure came to pass, because either the milder methods could not work upon the Obstinacy of the Offender, or the Crime was such, that a less Censure, was not thought sufficient to give Conviction to the Sinner of his Guilt and Danger. And for the like Reason, if any Instances may be found in Scripture of *Admonition, Reproof,* or *Censure*, not reaching so far as *Excommunication*, as those shall be an Argument that there was a course taken for Discipline in the Church, where such Acts or Directions relating to such Acts appear, so shall it be supposed that where these could not work the Reformation of Sinners, there should follow that utmost Judgment and Censure which the Church had Power from Christ to Pass and Execute. We are not to expect, as I have said, for a Reason already given, (that is to say, the Epistles to the Churches being written by the Apostles on particular occasions) to find an account therein at large of the Ordertaken with those Churches concerning Discipline, but only occasional hints and intimations of that which was done, or ought to be done:

lone: But these being put together and appearing to be the same with what is found in the Practice of the Primitive Church or in Rules which that acknowledged, the likeness and agreement between them shall be a good presumption is that the whole was from the Apostles, so that in these Churches of their Planting, where instances or directions appear of or concerning any Part of Discipline, there some Order was taken by them for such Discipline as we see to have been in the Primitive Church. If any Man approve not this Argument, it will lie upon him to give some account, how the Apostles came to do the very same things which a Power was supposed to be given for, in the *Power of the Keys*, given by Christ to his Church for the Remitting and Retaining Sins, unless they understood the Authority given by our Saviour therein to such purposes: How the Writings of the Apostles that are not intelligible otherwise, should be so easily intelligible when understood to speak of those things that were Practised in the Primitive Discipline, but that indeed they refer to some Order taken with the Church for such a Discipline: Or how the Practice of the Primitive Church should come to be the same with that which we have intimations of in

in the Writings of the Apostles, if both were not from their Authority: And how the same Customs and Rules in this matter should have taken place throughout the whole Church, if all Churches had not understood themselves to have a Power from Christ and his Apostles for this Purpose, and that the Church by the Ministry entrusted with it, was obliged to employ *Exhortations, Reproofs and Censures*, (which were the universal Practice of the Church) for the purpose of bringing Sinners to acknowledge their faults, and to go through a course of Repentance; and to adjudge to a farther Censure for putting out of the Church, where either these could not prevail on the obstinacy of the Sinner, or where the Crime was such as was not to be allowed hope of forgiveness by the Church; Until therefore some other Account be given of this, more Probable and more Rational, which I do not expect to see; this Act also of *S. Paul's delivering to Satan Hymenæus and Alexander*, that is, putting them out of the Church, shall be deemed to be an Act done upon the *Power of the Keys*, and to imply a Discipline in the Church wherein he did it, as also to be a Precedent for the Church to do the like in case of others that should make *shipwreck of the Faith*, and

and put away a good Conscience as those had done; whom therefore he delivered unto Satan, to the end that they might learn not to Blaspheme, which, whether it signify not to speak Evil of the Truth; as is usual with such as have departed from the Faith, that they may not seem to have done it without cause; or that they should not give occasion for the Name of God to be Blasphemed by the Sins they lived in, having put away a good Conscience; or not to speak Evil of, and despise that Authority that reproved their Wickedness, and would have reclaimed them by gentle methods, if it had been possible: It shall be meant that the Apostle passed this Censure on them, that they might be Disciplined or Instructed by this Act of Discipline to reform and recover from that Sin which caused their being put out of the Church, So that in this Instance also the End of this Censure appeareth to have been not the Destruction of the Sinner, but his Reformation and Repentance to the saving of his Soul: that is, This was the End, supposing the Person under this Censure to regard the same, and to Repent accordingly; but indeed supposing him not to Repent, he continued in the Power of Satan to which that Censure delivered him which put him out of the Church, and

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what the consequence of that must be as to the state of such a Man's Soul I need not say; for the Mind of every Man that hath been once instructed in the knowledge of a Christian, doth surely forebode the Evil to come.

But I come again to the Business between *S. Paul* and the *Corinthians*, when he comes to advise them to restore to the *Communion* of the Church the Person, whom he had before, as we have seen, required them to put away from among them, *2 Cor. 2. 6.* His Words are these. *Sufficient to such a Man is this Punishment which was inflicted of many; so that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be Swallowed up with overmuch Sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that you would confirm your Love towards him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also; for if I forgave any thing, To whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the Person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.* I said before that *Tertullian* was of Opinion that it was not the same Man whom the Apostle commanded them to deliver to Satan in his first Epistle, and in whose

whose favour he writes so much in his Second: But as the whole Church was against *Tertullian* in this his Opinion, and in that which drove him to be of this Opinion, Namely, his not believing that the Apostle would, or that the Church therefore could admit such a Sinner upon any Penance; so likewise is this Opinion of his excluded by the express Words of the Scripture. *For to this end also did I write to know the proof of you*, which shew that this is the Case that he Writ of in his former Epistle. The Case therefore was this: Upon *S. Paul's* first Epistle he was delivered to Satan, The Church of *Corinth* being obedient to, and executing his Order, did that which the Apostle had blamed them for not doing afore, *1 Cor. 5. 2.* The Censure being Executed has this Effect, that the Proud Offender is become Humble, Sorrowful, and Penitent, seeks to the Church, that had Censured him, to be Receiv'd again among them; but those who acted on the Church's behalf not being forward to grant him admittance, because they had incurred blame for not doing their Duty in the Censure of him at the first, he prevails with some of them however to send to *S. Paul* on his behalf, and to let him know his Sorrow and Repentance, which seems

to have given the Apostle occasion to write to the Church of *Corinth* in his favour, that himself was content, upon the Submission of the Offender, and upon the Report of such as had proposed to him to be satisfied with the Censure that had been, and with the Sorrow wrought thereby in him that had committed the Fault, to take off the Censure which he therefore willeth the Church also to take off, that he who had been so *put away from among them*, might be restored to their *Communion and Fellowship*. That this was the Case, the matter he writes plainly sheweth, for when he saith, *sufficient for such a one is the Censure inflicted by many*; what is the Censure inflicted by many? But the Censure which the Church, upon *S. Paul's* Order had passed in the Case, in which the whole Church had agreed, being prevail'd with by what he had written in his first Epistle to do their Duty, and to put away from among them that wicked Person: And what meaneth his saying *Sufficient is the Censure*? but this, That the Censure having passed, and having also had its Effect, it was enough, and there was no necessity of continuing the Offender under it, It might be taken off. When therefore he saith, *so that contrariwise ye ought to forgive him and comfort him*;

him; what is it but this, that they ought to take it off, the Offender's Sorrow and Repentance having appeared? and this, for fear of an Evil on the other side, *lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch Sorrow*, that is, lest he should be out of all hope, and fall into despair of God's Mercy, if the Church would not remit the Censure, and admit him to some hope thereof through their Prayers. What is it that he saith again, *that he writ to them before for this end, to see whether they would be obedient in all things?* But this, that tho he wrote to them to do their Duty, and put away from them that wicked Person, and he liked well that they had been obedient to him and done it, yet it was not his meaning that the Censure should not be taken off again, having had its effect, to work Sorrow and Repentance in the Sinner; but that as he wrote that they should do their duty in putting away, so it would please him well that they should; yea, he entreateth them that they would now restore him again to their Communion, and thereby *confirm their Love towards him*, so as that he might be persuaded by their readiness to receive him upon his Repentance, that even their Censure of him proceeded from Love towards him, from pure Kindness and Love to his

Soul, that this might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And when he saith, *To whom ye forgive any thing I forgive also; for if I forgave any thing, for your sakes forgave I it to him that I did forgive it, in the Person of Christ*; was it not to let them know that had proposed to him to be content with the Censure that had been passed, and to consent to its being remitted, since the Penitence of the Sinner appeared; that he was content to agree thereto, and as willing that the Censure should be now taken off as they were? And to let the rest of the Church, who waited to hear from him in the case, know that he had for his own part taken it off by the same Authority that he had first enjoined them to Pass the Censure, that they therefore were now as much concerned to take it off as they were before to pass it, if they would approve themselves as they had already in this Matter, *obedient to him in all things*; which that they might be more willing unto, he assures them that it was *for their sakes* that he was now ready to remit the Censure which he had before required them to lay on; To the end that their Censure might have the Effect, which as Christians they must have proposed from it, whereas that Effect otherwise might be obstructed in the circumstances

stances the Penitent was, who being now humbled, desired and sought it with Tears. And to the end also that there might be no Faction nor Division among them, whilst some might be for admitting him and others not. Both which things the Apostle seems to have feared, and to have been desirous to prevent, and in that respect to have said, *lest Satan should get advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his Devices.* Wherein he must mean, either that Satan might get some advantage in respect of the Person Excluded, which what could it be but by his Tempting him, either to despair of his Salvation, or to despise the Authority of the Church? Either of which must frustrate the Effect of the Church's Censure, or that Satan might get some advantage over the Church that had passed the Censure, and this in what more likely than in dividing them upon it? This therefore the Apostle would have them agree with him to prevent, by Re-admitting the Offender upon his Repentance, to the Communion of the Church. But here, to speak my own thoughts, there seems to be a mistake in this, that 'tis commonly thought, that *St. Paul* here re-admits the Offender to the Communion of the Church; whereas he rather seems to admit him only to Penance

and to the *Prayers of the Church*. My Reason is, because the strictness of Discipline under the Apostles will hardly allow that such an Offender should be forthwith re-admitted to the Communion of the Church, but to a course of Penance, in order to obtain Reconcilement with God, and to hopes of God's Mercy when this course of Repentance should be gone through. The Censure that passed upon him seems to have been such as so excluded him from the Church, that he was not allowed the means of Reconciliation with God by the Warrant of the Church, tho' not excluded from the hope of it by the Mercy of God. This his having no comfort from the Church made him so near being *swallowed up with Sorrow*; he being so excluded as to be denied the means of Reconcilement by the Church seems also to be that from whence Satan might have advantage to drive him to Despair, which might produce Apostacy or some other very great Evil. To one in these circumstances it must be a great comfort to have the Censure that was against him, so far abated as to be admitted to a course of Penance, and to the Prayers of God's Church towards his Reconcilement: In this the Church must have given sufficient cause to think their Censure proceeded from *Love towards him,*

him, from a true concern and care for his Soul, whilst there was an endeavour to instruct him to Repentance, such as might be to *Salvation, not to be Repented of*. This was enough to prevent his being swallow'd up with *overmuch Sorrow*, there being hope given of his Reconcilement with God sufficient to keep him from Despair, when the Church should take upon it to instruct him to Repentance, and Offer Prayers to God on his behalf, for his obtaining God's Peace and Pardon. In admitting him also to this, *S. Paul* and the Church may be said to *forgive*, and this *in the Person of Christ*, that is, by Authority from him, as by admitting him to Penance they allowed him hope of God's Forgiveness, and of the Church's Warrant thereof at the end of that course of Repentance, as hereby he was instructed in the right and sure way of obtaining forgiveness, and assisted with their Prayers towards it. But whatsoever become of this Opinion of mine in the matter, which I own the strictness of Discipline under the Apostles, and in the Primitive Church after them, (not soon, nor easily admitting Persons guilty of Crimes of this nature to the Communion of the Church) to have given occasion for: whether you will think with me, that the Favour *S. Paul* shew'd, was the abatement

ment of the Censure, and admitting the Offender to Penance, in order to his being restored to the Communion of the Church when that should be performed, and a grant of the Prayers of the Church towards the means of his Reconciliation; or with others, that it was a full Release of the Censure, whereby he that was put away from the Church, was now fully restored to the Communion thereof; in either case there will appear such evident marks and tokens of the Discipline of Penance, and of Power in the Church to exercise such a Discipline; yea, of an Obligation upon the Church to employ its Ministry accordingly, that wilful Prejudice must shut our Eyes, if we see them not. The Favour or Indulgence granted presupposeth the Censure which it mitigateth, and therefore the Communion of the Church either abated, or quite taken from him whom it restoreth to it. It could not have been said *sufficient to such a one is the Censure inflicted of many*, had it not been that the Church had put him under Censure. Nor would this have been said by the Apostle to be *sufficient*, but that the Censure had its Effect to make him *sorrowful to Repentance*. When he saith, that *contrariwise now they ought rather to forgive*

give him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, it suppoeth the Censure to have diminished, if not taken away from him his hope of God's Mercy, in that the Church would not allow him share in the common interest that Christians may have therein, and the sad Prospect of his Circumstances to have brought him so near the being swallowed up with sorrow: It directeth likewise the Church of God what is to be done, when an Offender becomes humble and penitent upon its Censure, that then the Censure is to be abated, and the Penitent admitted to the Comfort of the Prayers of his Fellow-Christians: or supposing the Sorrow such as hath wrought the Conversion of the Sinner, then is it to be taken off and wholly released, and the Communion of the Church to be granted him in assurance of God's Mercy and Pardon. When the Apostle saith, he forgave in the Person of Christ; and also telleth the Church that they ought to forgive and comfort the sorrowful Person; as this Act of his and of the Church must be resolved into the Power of Binding and Loosing, of Retaining and Remitting Sins given by our Lord in the Gospel under the Symbole of the Keys of his House, so it intimateth also to us wherein that Power

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consisteth, and how far it extendeth, namely, That the Ministers of Christ's Church by this Commission are Authorized to give Forgiveness of Sins to whomsoever they shall find disposed by serious Contrition and true Sorrow of Heart to receive it at God's Hands; and this not only so as to *Declare* it, but *Authoritatively to assure* it; otherwise, how should what the Church did in Forgiving, be matter of such Comfort to the Penitent? Or its refusal to Forgive, be the occasion of his being *Swallowed up with overmuch Sorrow*? The Reason must be this, that he could not assure himself so well of God's Forgiveness, as the Church might assure him thereof, should that judge his Repentance sincere, or take upon it to set him in a way for the perfecting of his Repentance; and his Hope would be the greater when the Church should give him the assistance of the Prayers thereof towards his Reconcilement with God. Yet this may not be understood to intimate that the Power of the Keys, by which Sins are Bound or Remitted, is such, as that Pronouncing Sentence of Forgiveness, God shall Ratify it, or, that Binding or Retaining shall bear no hope of any kind, as to God's Mercy; for we may be assured, that God gives Pardon to whomsoever he sees disposed to receive

receive it; and that disposition indeed being once brought to pass, the Ministry of the Keys consisteth only in declaring the Pardon given by God. Nevertheless the Ministry of the Keys acteth in bringing that disposition to pass, in procuring that disposition of the heart, which is requisite to make Men capable of Forgiveness, in bringing them to the knowledge of their Sins, in directing the course which they have to take in seeking their Reconcilement with God, in judging also concerning the Repentance wrought, and assuring God's Forgiveness upon the best judgment that it can make of the disposition it hath laboured to procure, and so far as the Prayers of the Church on the Penitent's behalf can add to the confidence of his being heard in what he asketh of God, as to his Pardon and Reconcilement. In which respect the Church forgiving affordeth not a little Comfort to a Penitent; as on the contrary, this retaining his Sins doth it to his sorrow, and to the increasing of his fears in respect of God's Judgment. When *St. Paul* saith that he *forgave*, and would have them to *forgive*, lest *Satan* should get an advantage of them, of whose devices they were not ignorant; if this be understood in respect to the Party excluded, the meaning is, as I
shall have

have said before, lest Satan should take advantage otherwise to drive him to despair, or tempt him to despise the Authority of the Church either of which must frustrate the Church's Censure, as to its doing any good upon the Offender, towards the saving of his Soul: This first therefore intimateth to us that the design of the Church's Censure, which had passed for the *delivery of such a one to Satan*, was, as hath been said before, that his being delivered to Satan might make way for his escape out of the Snare, and getting clear from the Power of the Devil; which *S. Chrysostom* taking notice of, observes upon the Place as I remember, somewhere to this purpose, That the Person was not said to be *given* to Satan, but only *delivered*; a distinction, that if it have not ground in the Words, it has in the Thing, in the nature of the Sentence, and the End declared by the Apostle before, when he saith it was for the *saving of the Soul in the Day of the Lord Jesus*, (which could not be if the delivering to Satan had been the giving into his Power to hold and keep): which end the Apostle sheweth himself to have always sought in this, that he presseth the Church to take off the Censure, lest Satan should otherwise get advantage; whose getting advantage over the Person excluded, he would not have

have been solicitous to prevent, had he been before delivered to Satan for the purpose of his having advantage over him; and taking him into his Power and Possession. This moreover intimateth what should be the Church's aim in all times in its ministration of Discipline, as well when it putteth under Censure as when it releaseth from such Censures, namely, the prevention of Satan's getting advantage to Ruin those Souls which the Church is concerned to seek to Save. This Aim being pursued, justifieth that difference which may be observed to have been in the way of Penance and Reconciliation in the Church, which hath sometimes been most strict in its Discipline, not admitting some sort of Sins to any Penance, or at least, not till the point of Death, or till after a long time; and at other times hath abated much of that Rigour; and this is as well according to the Circumstances of the Church, as according to the signs of Repentance appearing in the Offender. As to the Sense of the Church, understanding this Scripture to be good Evidence for a Discipline in the Church to Censure Offenders, and put them out of the Church, if they will not otherwise be brought to Repentance, and to abate of such Censure, or take it off when the Sinner shall become

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Humble and Penitent; I shall not alledg what has been Argued to this Purpose from it by Papiſts, and nor Deny'd by Proteſtants ſince *Luther* firſt Diſputed againſt Indulgences, but rather the uſe which the Church made thereof heretofore againſt the *Montaniſts* and *Novatians*, urging the Example of *S. Paul* in this Place to be Evidence for a Power in the Church, to abate or take off its Cenſures as that ſhou'd ſee cauſe, from the Submiſſion or Repentance of them, that for the Crimes of Adultery or Apoſtacy were excluded the Church: For though *Tertullian*, as a *Montaniſt*, reply that it was not the ſame Perſon, who for Inceſt, a Crime as great or greater than Adultery, had been put out of the Church by *S. Paul's* Order, that is here Reſtored; yet he does not deny this to be ſome Favour and Indulgence to ſome Perſon that was under Cenſure for ſome leſs Crime; ſo that of all hands it has been agreed to refer to a Diſcipline in the Church, that could put under Cenſure ſuch as Profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, ſhould live in Sins, inconfiſtent with that Profeſſion, and might in moſt caſes at leaſt, if not in all, when ſuch Offenders ſhould be humbled, admit them to Penance, and by degrees Receive them again into the Communion of the Church, and ſo reſtore them

them to the hope of God's Mercy and Pardon, which that Communion supposeth and assureth.

• There is yet another Passage in this Epistle of S. Paul to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 12. 20. that seems to speak plainly of a Discipline that S. Paul intended to make use of, for the Correcting Faults that some among them were guilty of; *I fear (saith he) lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be Debates, Envyings, Wrath, Strifes, Back-bitings, Whisperings, Swellings, Tumults: And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have Sinned already, and have not Repented of the Uncleanness, and Fornication, and Lasciviousness which they have committed.* What is this that he feareth that he should not find them such as he would, but that he was afraid he should not find them so good Christians as he would have them to be? And again, that he should be found of them, such as they would not, but in respect of the Resolution he had taken to Rebuke and Censure their Faults? he not intending any longer to bear with their *Debates, Envyings, Wrath, Strifes*, and other unchristian Practices and Behaviour, altogether unbecoming their holy Profession, And this

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that he said he was afraid of, *lest God should bumble him among them when he came, and that he should Mourn for many that had Sinned afore, and not Repented* (by that time he should come) *of the Uncleaness, Whoredom, and Wantonness which they had done, but that he feared he should, to his Sorrow, be under a necessity of Punishing and Censuring the Faults of such as should not shew themselves to have Repented of such their Faults before his coming?* This is S. Chrysostom's Exposition of this Scripture, that when he speaks of *mourning* for many, it is in respect of the *Sorrow* that it would be to him to be under a necessity of *Punishing them*, and that he speaketh thus to give them warning that they might Repent them of those their Faults, and that such as should not, he would treat at his coming as Persons under an incurable *Disease*, who are given over and their Cure despaired of. But a greater Authority than this of S. Chrysostom's is that of the Apostle himself, who finding fault with the *Corinthians* in his former Epistle, that they had not *mourned to put away him that had done Evil*, must reasonably be supposed to mean the same thing when here he speaks of *mourning* himself, in respect of *many that had Sinned and should not have Repented before* his

his coming. It being evident also by divers Passages in Ancient Christian Authors, that Excommunication in the Primitive Church was Solemnized in a Fashion of Mourning, as for a Member lost; and likewise that a Sorrow was expressed by the Church on the Penitent's behalf when he was admitted to Penance, and Prayers were made for his Reconcilement to God; this will justify beyond all exception the reason of this Mourning of *S. Paul*, to be for those whom he should be constrained to put out of the Church for Sins which they had committed, and not shewn any Repentance for. Besides there is something cometh after, which makes this appear to be his meaning yet more plainly, and that is the Severity which he threatneth against the Obstinate Sinners, *2 Cor.* 13. 2. *Saying, Now I write to them which heretofore have Sinned, and to all others, that if I come again I will not spare, and more to the same purpose, Verse 10. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the Power which the Lord hath given me, to Edification, and not to Destruction.* What is this that he would not spare them that had Sinned, but that he would not spare sharply to Rebuke them, or rather, (he having done this already by this his Epistle) to Punish

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nish them so far as his Power in Christ would reach to do it? For what else is that which he would not willingly be forced to, the *using sharpness according to the Power which the Lord had given him*, but the Extremity of Censure, which by Power from Christ he might, and should be obliged to use against such Sinners if they continued Obstinate, and would not take notice of, and warning from this which he tells them, of his Power to Censure such Offences, and of his purpose to make use of that Power, yea, of his Being under a necessity to use it against them that should not repent them of their wickedness? What this *Power* was which the *Lord had given him*, and which he purposed to use against them he doth not say: He declares indeed that the Lord had given it him, to *Edification*, and not to *destruction*, and therein intimates his purpose to use it accordingly, that they might rest assur'd that even the *sharpness* he shou'd use, should be for the good of their Souls, notwithstanding whatsoever Severity he might be constrained to proceed against them with. And as for the *Power*, whatever it was, he was resolved to use it against *them that had Sinned, and had not Repented*; It may reasonably be presumed therefore to be some Power of his *Ministry*,

stry, which, whoever will not think to be the same with that which Christ gave to his Church and Disciples, for Binding and Loosing, and Remitting and Retaining Sins, ought to shew what other Power it was, and when given him by the Lord. In the mean time, I cannot but rest fully perswaded, that Christ our Saviour being known to have given a Power to his Church under the Symbole of the Keys of his House, for the Removing and Putting out of the Church Scandalous Sinners, when his Apostle threatens to make use of a Power which he hath from Christ against such as *have Sinned and not Repented*, he must mean a Power, which they, as Christians, must understand him to have as part of his Ministry entrusted with him by Christ our Lord; which therefore having in Trust, he might well write to them as though he were under a necessity, and kind of compulsion to use it against them that should not *Repent* before his coming; they themselves being sensible that his Trust, as to that *Power which the Lord had given him* could not be discharged otherwise, if no other means could prevail with them. He that will, however, is free for me, to suppose some extraordinary Effect of this *Power* in *S. Paul*, which the Sentence of Excommunication in these days produceth not; for I have

allowed, that during the time of the Apostles, to manifest God's Presence in his Church, those that were shut out of it, became subject to visible Evils and Plagues, which S. Paul might mean, when he speaketh of the *Destruction of Flesh*, intimating some Punishment of the Body, to Reduce the Spirit to a fear of God's future Judgment, that so it might inwardly resolve upon that Repentance, which through Christ saveth from the Wrath to come. Nevertheless, this being a Thing consequent on the Censure that then shut such Persons out of the Church, this of putting out of the Church shall be presumed to be the Power that S. Paul would not spare to use against them that had Sinned, and not Repented of their Wickedness.

But to go farther, There is a Passage in S. Paul's Epistle to the *Galatians*, that seemeth plainly to imply, and refer to some Order taken with that Church also, for a Discipline therein, *Gal. 6. 1. Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are Spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* Here he supposeth it the Duty of those that were endued with *Spiritual Gifts and Graces* (as especially they that had the Rule of the Church of Christ were) to restore such of their Christian Brethren

Brothren as should be overtaken in any fault, doing things unbecoming and inconsistent with their Christian Profession. How should they understand they were to restore such, but by putting them upon Repentance; And how should they do this without some Authority or Power to constrain them thereunto? who being also bidden to go about this with meekness; it is to be supposed that they had some Authority over such Delinquents, which they should use with Moderation and Mildness, yea and Compassion; considering themselves to be Men of like Passions and Infirmities, and liable to like Temptations. I am not moved to think this to be any thing of another nature; because the Apostle directs himself here to the whole Church, and not particularly to those that had the Ministry therein, because all the People had an interest in what was done by the Church, as to the censuring of Offenders, or reproving their Faults, such Reproofs and Censures always passing at their Publick Assemblies, wherein nevertheless such particular Persons acted always for the Body, as were authorized by their Ministry for that purpose.

There is moreover a Passage in one of *S. Paul's* Epistles to the *Thessalonians*, which seems to be an Order taken for a Discipline

pline in that Church also; you a Command relating to it, enjoined in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, which therefore being grounded upon his Authority, all Christians shall be obliged to regard and fulfil. It is in *2 Thess.* 3. 6. *Now we command you, Brethren, that ye withdraw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us.* And ver. 14. *If any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* What is it that they should withdraw themselves from the disorderly; but the same with that which he giveth in charge in his Epistle to the Romans, cap. 16. 17. that they should mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the Doctrine which they had learned; and avoid them? Which by the way, I observe to be an Instance of some Order in that Church of Rome, also to the like purpose. Now withdrawing from, avoiding and not keeping company with, seem all one and the same, importing the not having any Fellowship or Society with such; whom if they were to avoid, so as not to have any Civil Conversation with them, much more so as not to have communion with them in Holy Things. A like Order the Apostle giveth, *1 Cor.* 5. 11. (whereof

(whereof some notice has been taken already) *not to keep company, if any Man that is called a Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such an one, so not to eat.* This may be good Counsel only, if the Apostle be thought to direct himself to Particular Christians only; but as he writes unto the Church of the Thessalonians, or to any other Church in general *Terms to withdraw from, avoid and not company with such Persons, it is to be supposed that Church should understand it self obliged to note, mark, and separate such from the Society and Communion of Christians, and that Private Christians should apprehend it their concern, to take notice of such as are thus condemned by the Church, to avoid them, and not to have any familiariey with them, not so much as to eat with them; to demonstrate how far they would be from communicating with them in the Offices of Christianity.* Otherwise we must suppose S. Paul to have used a very weak Argument to the Corinthians, when he gives this for a Reason why they were to blame, for that they had not *put away from among them the Incestuous Person, because he had wrote unto them in an Epistle, not to company with Fornicators;* 1 Cor. 5. 9. were it not that they might

might easily thence have understood, that if they were not to hold Civil Converse and Society with such, much less should they have suffered such to have continued in Communion with the Church; from which, they well knew, they had a Power from Christ to exclude them and put them away. And otherwise, also, how should this be good Reasoning in the Apostle, when he saith he did not mean to require them to forbear the company of the *Gentiles* in such case; but that they should not keep company with a *Brother* being a Fornicator, &c. For that neither he nor they had to do to judge those that are without, whom they must therefore leave to God's Judgment; but they had Power to judge those that were of the Church or *within*, and therefore having this Power, they could not but apprehend, that if he forbid them to company with such, it was their duty as a Church to put away from among themselves every such wicked Person; and with those that should be so put away, no Christian might keep company *so much as to eat*. Let it be observed here also, that this Interpretation is not mine; but what the practice of the whole Church inforceth, wherein the Company of Persons Excommunicate was ever shunned and avoided, by faithful Christians, until such time

time as they were admitted to Penance, in order to their being reconciled and received into the Church.

Moreover, the Order taken for the excluding of Hereticks out of the Church, as that of *S. Paul*, Gal. 1. 9. *If any Man preach any other Gospel than that ye have received, let him be Anathema*; that is, as the Antients have interpreted it, Let him be separated, set aside, shut out of the Church, to expect his Judgment at the coming of Christ: And *Tir.* 3. 9. *A Man that is an Heretick after the first and second admonition reject* with others of like nature: as it importeth the Power of the Keys, to exclude from the Church such as depart from the Truth; therein is it an Evidence of that Authority which bringeth to Effect the Discipline thereof, by excluding those that will not be otherwise perswaded, but to hold the Truth in unrighteousness. The Power that excludeth is the same, how different soever the Causes of exclusion may be, and the Instances in every case, as they are alike Evidences of the Church's Power, shall help to justify the use of such a Power, in every case that the Reason of Christianity will warrant. Indeed if I might be allowed to offer at a conjecture, touching the Reason of *S. Paul's* directing this Power

Power of the Church to be employed against Hereticks that deny some Truth or other of Christianity ; I should be apt to say, that probably 'twas because all Christian Truth was deposited with the Church to be a Foundation for its being built up, and edified in Righteousness ; so that the opposing of the Truth is a weakening of the Foundation of Godliness, and either hinders the Practice thereof, or takes from the obligations that all are under to that Practice ; and the Errors that Hereticks substitute in the room of Christian Truth, are wicked Principles, that will produce wicked practices ; which practices, though some that hold Heretical Errors may disown, or may not be guilty of (the Truth, which they hold probably prevailing over the Poison of their Errors, that the Infection does not so corrupt their Manners as otherwise it would) yet in as much as such Errors tend to wickedness ; or give advantage to Sinners to do wickedly, this shall be Reason sufficient for the Church to imploy its Authority against such Hereticks, to cut off thereby the Source of Wickedness, and to prevent Sinners of any advantage they may think to make of such Heresies, to proceed in their Evil Works. But this is conjecture only, that Heresie and Hereticks were detested so as that

that was condemned, and these were cut off from the Church, upon the account that Hereticks were wicked, and their Heresie made them wicked in their Practices and Lives: If it were for another Cause that had not respect to this, and they were put out of the Church, barely for professing to believe the contrary of that which they professed, when they were made Christians; Shall it not be as reasonable that the Church put away also those, who having made Profession of a Christian Life, in their Works and Practices deny it, and depart from it, being Vile and Disobedient, and unto every good Work Reprobate? Shall there be any room left for pretense, that the Church hath not Power to do this, which the Apostles took order with the Churches to have done in both those cases, and which the Church in the first and purest times of Christianity did accordingly in both cases?

There is a Passage in *S. John* 1 Ep. 5. 16. *If any Man see his Brother Sin a Sin, which is not unto Death, he shall ask and he shall give him Life for them that Sin not unto Death: There is a Sin unto Death, I do not say that he shall pray for it: which at first sight seems to speak of Private Prayers of particular Persons, but yet there is reason*
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to think rather it referreth to the Prayers which the Church made on behalf of Penitents, when they were in a way of being restored to the Communion of the Church. For *Tertullian* in many places of his Book *de Pudicitia*, argues from this Scripture, that Penance was not to be allowed to Adulterers. The *Novatians* also at the Council of *Nice*, urged it to *Constantine*, as a reason why the Church ought always to refuse Penance to Apostates. And I do not find that it was denied on the part of the Church in either Dispute, that the Place of Scripture referred to Penance, but only that the Church admitted not their consequence. *S. John* was understood by the Church, as well as by them, to speak of, and refer to Penance in that Scripture; but these would have it that *S. John* should therein prescribe to the Church not to grant Penance to Adulterers or Apostates; whereas the Church understood his words, *I do not say that ye shall pray for it*, not to command that such should be admitted to Penance; that is, to allow the Church a Power absolutely to refuse them it, in case it should think so fit; but not to prescribe against the Church's Power of granting it, if that should be thought fit, and most for the intrest of Christianity, and the good of such

ch Sinners Souls. And as the Church understood the Apostle in this Sense, so deedly his words are hardly Intelligible, unless supposed to refer to the use and practice of Penance in the Church; for how should private Christians judge against that light of Conscience their Neighbour's, to grant or refuse him their Prayers upon it? The Church on the other hand may be well allowed to judge, what Sins on the grounds and intrest of Christianity will allow her to admit to Penance, and what the same will oblige her to refuse it altogether, leaving them to God's judgment.

In the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, cap. 6. 4. when the Apostle saith, *It was not possible that those that fell away should be renewed again to Repentance*; there is reason to think his meaning to be, that such could not be restored by Penance, as other Sinners were according to the practice of the Church. For as when any are Baptized into Christianity, they may be properly said to be instructed or dedicated to Repentance, because of the Repentance from dead works which they profess; so they that fall into Sins after their Baptism, when they come to submit themselves to the Church for their cure, are no less properly said to be *instructed again, or renewed*

renewed to Repentance, in respect of the Repentance they are directed to go thro' in order to their Reconcilement with God. Now Apostates that *fall away* from Christianity, after evident convictions of its Truth, after their having seen, and after having themselves been partakers of the Power of the Holy Ghost, may not expect the Apostle says to be instructed, or *renewed again to Repentance* by the Church as other Sinners were: And the Apostle's Reason agrees, *For because the Earth that receives Rain, and renders no fruit is nigh unto cursing*: Therefore it is not to be thought that such shall easily obtain God's Grace to resolve them to become sincere Christians, or his Mercy to pardon their wretched Apostasie, and consequently the Church must have reason to refuse to undertake the instructing them again to Repentance, whereof they are not in probability capable, and whereby the Church knows not how to assure their Reconciliation with God, whom they have so highly provoked. And that this is the Apostle's meaning, there is this further ground to conclude; to wit, that it is not reasonable to think that the Apostle should say, It is impossible that such a one should repent; but this may be, that he should say, *It is impossible that such a one should*
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be instructed again to Repentance; to wit, by the Church, to let such know that they must not expect that Comfort from the Church; which indeed must be false to its Trust, if the means of Reconciliation were not made by the Church difficult as to such Sinners; if so be ever it admitted them to any means at all for their being reconciled. And again, *cap.* 10. 26. the Allusion which the Apostle makes to the custom of the *Jews*, (understood by the *Hebrews* to whom he writes) consisteth in this, that as there was no Sacrifice among them for Apostates, so the Christian Sacrifice of the Prayers of the Church was not to be offered for those that had renounced Christianity. And 'tis also more reasonable to think the Apostle should mean this, than that such should never have benefit from the Sacrifice of Christ, or that there could no hope remain to them of God's Mercy, although they should repent of their wickedness. For supposing them never to be admitted to the means of Reconciliation by the Church; yet after such Persons were remitted wholly to God, there might some hope remain of their finding Mercy with him upon their Repentance; though his Church considering the great wickedness of their Hearts, could not give them assurance

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surance or the hopes thereof. This Interpretation of these Texts, and that before of S. John, infer the strictness of Discipline under the Apostles to be such, that some Sins which were of a deep dye, were not admitted to Penance in order to the Communion of the Church being regained thereby. Howbeit, though difficulty was made of readmitting some sorts of Sins, yet the Church did not understand the Apostle's Order, as Peremptory against their Admission, which was pretended by the *Montanists* and *Novatians*, who therefore were Schismatics in separating from the Church, when the whole Church was agreed that there might be an abatement of this strictness, when the Church should see cause and necessity for it. But whether the *Montanists* and *Novatians* were right in their understanding of these Texts, to disallow the Church's Ministerial Power, in the reconciling of such Penitents as had committed heinous Sins, whom they would not have therefore to be received by the Church to Communion again, nor to the Participation of the Holy Mysteries, notwithstanding their Repentance were ever so sound; but to be left wholly to God, and remain separated from his Church, (which was a Thing long disputed in the the *African* Church, and an Opinion held by

by several that did not think fit to separate from the Church upon it; which was the Crime of the *Montanists* and *Novatians*) or the Church that understood these Scriptures, to imply only a difficulty, as to the re-admitting of such Penitents; that they might not easily find Admission from the Church, though not to take away wholly the Power of the Church, as to the admitting them to her Communion, in case there should be reason to judge their Repentance sincere: It is, however, plain that these Scriptures were understood to refer to a Discipline of the Church, which did instruct Men to Repentance; and did in some cases *renew them again to Repentance*; and even where it might not restore them, there must be implied a Discipline, which put them from that which they might not be restored unto; and if so be that there might nevertheless be a Power for the restoring in all cases though with difficulty; therein will appear the full Ministerial Power of the Church, in the Exclusion of such from Communion with the rest of Christians, as committed heinous Sins inconsistent with their Christian Profession; and in the Reconciliation of such Sinners again by the means of Penance, or a Repentance according to the nature of their Crimes.

The Apostle *S. James*, also, *cap. 5. 14* when he directeth the *Sick to call for the Elders of the Church to pray over them, that their Sins may be forgiven them; and to Confess their Sins one to another, and to pray one for another;* is thought by Men of Learning, to refer to what was a Practice in the Church for Sick Persons, to apply to the Ministers thereof for the cure of their Sin; from whom *Confession of their Sins* was in such Circumstances accepted, so as they were admitted to the Prayers of the Church upon it; but nevertheless such stood bound, according to Custom of long continuance in the Church, to perform their Penance, in case they recovered. For though the Apostle makes mention there, also, of the *Recovery of the Sick;* which was a Miraculous and Extraordinary Effect, that followed on the Prayers of the Elders of the Church in those times; yet may he well be supposed, nevertheless to refer to that which the Ministry of the Church was primarily concerned in, and chiefly effectual to; namely, the cure of their Sin, and God's forgiveness of the same, upon the Prayers of the Church, and the Penitent's Humiliation.

Moreover,

Moreover, those Scriptures that make mention of *Rule and Government* in the Church of Christ, whether as speaking of the duty of Pastors, *to take heed, as Shepherds, to the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers, to Rule well the House, and Church of God,* or of the duty of private Christians, *to submit to those that are over them, and obey them as those that watch for their Souls, and must give an account, and to know them which are over them in the Lord to admonish them,* concur all to evidence a Power of Discipline in the Church, to instruct according to Godliness, and Conduct in the way thereof; to Admonish, Rebuke and Censure those that depart from it, and to bring back the Penitent into it, and admit them to Reconciliation with the Church and with God upon their return, to seek the way of Truth and Righteousness.

Acts 20. 28

Rom. 12. 8

1 Tim. 3. 5

1 Tim. 5. 17.

Heb. 13. 17.

1 Thes. 5. 12.

Especially the Epistles to *Timothy and Titus* containing Instructions, that *they might know how to behave themselves in the House of God, which is his Church,* shew us in a clear light the Government and Discipline of the Church, by the many Rules given for them to proceed on, and act in the Government of the Churches committed to them, and in the Correction and Censure

1 Tim. 3. 15.

of Offenders. To Timothy it is given in charge concerning his Personal Behaviour in his high Station, that he be an Example to the Faithful in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Fidelity, in Purity, 1 Tim. 4. 12.

To Titus is given the same Charge, that in all things he shew himself a Pattern of good Works. Again, as to their using all diligence in the Work and Ministry to which they were appointed, Timothy is charged

1 Tim. 4. 16. to take heed to himself and to his Doctrine, that he might both save himself and them that

2 Tim. 4. 2. heard him, and to be instant in season and Tit. 2. 1. 8. out of season. Titus is also charged to speak

cap 3. 8. the things which become sound Doctrine, therein to shew Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, and that he affirm constantly the necessity of good Works among Christians.

Timothy is told how Bishops and Deacons should be qualified, that he might know how to behave himself in respect of them, that is doubtless, both know what manner of Persons to Admit to those Offices in the Church of God, and see the Behaviour of those that were Admitted were answerable to their high Character. Titus

Tit. 1. 5. 6. being left in Crete to set the Church in Order and Ordain Elders therein is also put in mind how these should be qualified, that the care might lie upon him to Ordain such only, and see they continued according

to that Character. Many more things were given in charge to them both alike, but especially in the matter of Discipline, which serveth most our present purpose. Timothy is ordered to charge those that had part in the Ministry with, and under him, ^{1 Tim. 1. 3. & 4.} that they taught no strange Doctrine, nor gave heed to Fables and Genealogies, which ministered Questions rather than godly Edifying. And that if any taught otherwise than according to the Words and Truth of our ^{1 Tim. 6. 3. & 5.} Lord Jesus Christ, and the Doctrine which is according to Godliness; from such he should withdraw himself. Titus is also told of Un- ^{Tit. 1. 10. 11, & 13.} ruly and vain Talkers, and Deceivers, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy Lucre's sake, and that the Mouths of such must be stopped, and that such he should rebuke sharply, that they might become Sound in the Faith: and for such of them as were wilful and obstinate in their wicked Errors, that is, Hereticks, after the first and second Admonition he should reject or avoid. Where note, that Timothy's being bid to withdraw himself from such, and Titus to avoid or reject them, whether you will, are as one and the same thing, amounting to nothing more nor less than a Censure, that might remove such False Teachers from the Church: For in Reason it is to be understood that S. Paul prescribes that to

Timothy and *Titus* which he intends their Flocks should Practise : Supposing, that being Christians, they would be careful to avoid the Infection of those whom their Pastors should withdraw from and avoid ; thereby giving notice that they counted them dangerous, not to themselves, but to their Flocks. 'Tis also to be supposed, that Bishops of a Church in being ordered to withdraw themselves from, and avoid false Teachers, must understand it to be their care and duty to see such removed from their Flock, otherwise, how possibly is it to be thought they should withdraw themselves from such ? 'Tis not to be supposed they should withdraw themselves from their Flocks, for that such have crept in among them ; that were to leave the Flock of Christ Exposed to their Allurements and Beguilings. Moreover, in reference to the Manners and Lives of Christians of all Ranks, which they were concerned so to inspect and oversee, as to take heed to their being such as might Adorn the Doctrine of God and our Saviour ; It is required of *Timothy*, that he command and teach the things that appertained to

1 Tim. 4. Godliness, that he Exhort, Reprove, Rebuke,
11. make full Proof of his Ministry, let no Man
2 Tim. 4. despise his Youth : As of *Titus* also, that he
2 & 5 spake the things which became sound Doctrine,

Exhortation, that he affirm constantly that they Ti. 2. 11.
which have believed in God must be careful cap. 3. 8.
to maintain good works, that he exhort and cap. 2. 15.
rebuke with all Authority, And, let no Man
despise him. What is to reprove, rebuke,
make full proof of the Ministry, and to exhort,
and rebuke with all Authority, but to make
use of all the Authority their Ministry
had, to oblige all such as Professed them-
selves Christians to be what they Professed.
And how also should they keep themselves
above being despised by any, but if any
Sinners should stand it out against their
Reproofs and Admonition (as though
they sought a Proof of the Power of Christ
in them, or as slighting their Charge and
Warning,) by using sharpness according to the
Power which the Lord had given them ?
Which Extremity of Censure, no one that
had any the least fear of God remaining
in him could possibly despise. But S. Paul
Writing more largely to Timothy than Ti-
mus about these Matters, his Instructions to
the former touching his Government of the
Church are more particular and full. In-
somuch that we find particularly (to our
Purpose) Rules given for his acting; In Re-
proof, which is the first Act of Discipline
towards the Amendment of such as may
have done amiss, that herein he treat all
after a becoming, meek, and affectionate
manner,

1 Tim. 5. 1 manner, *an Elder as a Father*, having regard to the Place and Authority that he also has in the Church of God; the *Ne- wices* and meanest Christians as Brethren, kindly and affectionately, therein to make them sensible that his Reproof proceeded not from Imperiousness in his Office, but from the Concern he had for their Souls welfare, and the necessity laid upon him to take Care of the Church of God. In *Rebuke or Censure*, that when Offences should make this necessary, he should observe, in order to his having perfect knowledge (always necessary to be had before Judgment pass on any Fault.) In the Case of an *Elder*, *not to receive an Accusation against him, unless from two or three Witnesses*, (the Reason to be presumed this, that it being their Office to Reprove the Faults of others, for that cause, they likely are hated by such, whose Deeds they Reprove, and upon that very often falsely accused). Which Caution to a Bishop of the Church must be understood by him to imply it his Concern in every one's Case to be rightly informed. And after this he may spare no kind or sort of Offenders or Offences; *Them that Sin, Rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the Elect Angels, that thou observe these*

1 Tim. 5.
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the things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. So strict a Charge as this plainly importeth a necessity on him to fulfil the Trust of his Ministry in this Instance especially, as also that the matter is of great moment and consequence to the Church of God. He must then you see, *Rebuke them that Sin, before all, i. e.* Such as shall have committed any Scandalous Offence (whom for not Reforming after Admonition, it shall be necessary to Rebuke more *sharply* and to Censure) he must Rebuke openly before all, that is, in the presence of the Community of Christians. Wherein I mark the Intrest of the Congregation in this work of Discipline, as Censures of this kind were to Pass in their Publick Assemblies, (at which, as the People bewailed the case of the Sinner, and prayed on his behalf that the Censure might work the Cure of his Sin, so the Church received satisfaction for the Scandal, by the removal of the Person that had given it, from the Privileges which the Faithful enjoyed, and none others had right to enjoy): And the two great causes that good, and well-meaning Christians may have to take Offence at those that have the Ministry of Discipline in the Church, if Sinners, guilty of Notorious Crimes, of whose amend-

amendment there is no appearance go unrebuked, and without Censure, be suffered to continue in the Church, and have share in its Communion. But this Censure of Offenders was to be thus Publick, *that others might fear*, be kept from falling into the like sins, by fear of coming under the same Censure themselves, and not only this, but that they might have fear also concerning the State and Condition of their Souls, in reference to Sins not known, and conclude that if Vicious Persons, whose Sins are known cannot be Tolerated within the Church, but must be Excluded from it, as not having Right or Share in the Promises of God; even they themselves being guilty of Sins committed in secret, have reason to fear, as to the Case of their Souls; lest being guilty before God of Sins inconsistent with Christianity, their Interest in God's Mercy as to the forgiveness of their sins should be likewise forfeited. But let notice be also taken, that *S. Paul* does here conjure *Timothy* by all that is Sacred and Holy as to do his Duty herein, so to Act uprightly in it: When he *chargeth him before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Elect, or Holy Angels*, is it not a Charge as himself must expect to answer before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, when the Son of Man shall come
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in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, for the fulfilling of his Ministry in this particular, that he observe to do his Duty therein? And that he Execute this Discipline *χωρὶς προκειμενων*, without prejudice, which in a judicial sense signifies *Præcipitancy* in Condemning a Person, not allowing, or not regarding the Defence he may make for himself; or *Præ-judging* upon Respect, where he that should Judge the Matter, is præpossessed with an ill Opinion of the Party standing to be Judged, or, that *Prejudice*, which 'tis possible for a Judge to have against a Man out of particular Hatred or Ill-will. Nothing of this should have the least place, so much as in the Mind of him that is entrusted with this Discipline, or acteth in any part of its Ministry; much less should it be suffered to influence any thing done thereupon, Farther it is given him in charge, that herein he do nothing by *Partiality* *κατὰ πρό-σκλησιν*, out of inclination, in favour to any Man's Cause, or any Man's Person. The Apostle seems in both Expressions to refer to the Command in the Law, *Exod. 23. 1, 2. Not to Judge on false Report*, and again, *not to decline after any to wrest Judgment*. We shall not wonder at the strictness of the Apostle's Charge about the execution of this Discipline, and the laying

ing aside all Prejudice and Partiality therein; if we consider the Discipline as a Part of the Gospel-Ministry, and the Process of such Censure and the Judgment thereof as Passing in the Church of God. The Trust also concerning it, as given and committed by him *with whom there is no respect of Persons*: And that there must be a peculiar Concern on those that Censure other Mens Sins, that themselves do not sin in the doing it, (as they will, if either they forget the Christian Spirit and Temper of meekness and Charity, or have not a true regard to do what is Just, and to do it impartially, or not a regard to the End of God and our Saviour, in the Institution of this Discipline, which is the Reformation of the Sinner, and bringing him to Repentance): And that even the Importance of the thing requires the strictest Charge, and the greatest Care; the Souls of Men and their Salvation; the Honour of Religion and Propagation of the same; the Unity of Christ's Church; and the Edification thereof in Righteousness, being all concerned, and in a great measure, depending on the due, and right, faithful and impartial exercise of this Discipline in God's Church. But to look farther into *Timothy's* Instructions about this matter; *S. Paul* having thus required
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and Charged him to do his Duty, and proceed against *them that Sin*, and should not repent them of their wickedness, by *Rebuke and Censure*, goes on to instruct him how to act after this, so as his Censure might have its Effect, according to the End of God and our Saviour, in the Power and Authority given him, for the Reformation and Amendment of such Sinners. This I take to be the meaning of his next words, *Lay hands suddenly on no Man, neither be partaker of other Mens Sins*, that is to say, As he had Power of Judging, whom to Admit, and whom not to Admit to Penance after such Censure, and might not of right admit to it any but such as he should have reason to think, *being pricked in their heart* out of concern at their guilt and danger, were sincerely desirous of being Admitted to the Prayers of God's Church, and to be instructed by its Ministry in the Way and Work of Repentance: So he should take heed to act conscientiously, and wisely, and warily in this particular also of his Trust, not easily admitting to Penance such Offenders (this being the means, which consequently must give hope of their Reconciliation with the Church) and especially not suddenly receiving any such to the Peace and Communion of the Church again.

again. And the reason he adds by way of suggestion is such as must have obliged him to take special care in this matter, *lest he be partaker of other Men's Sins*, that is, those sins which his Censure (according to the intent of God and Christ, upon whose Authority he acted therein) should have reformed in such Offenders, but would not do so, if he granted Penance to them that were not fit for it, and especially if before they had approved their Repentance and Reformation, they were received to the Communion of the Church again.

This I take to be the Apostle's Sense; for that *Imposition of hands*, was a Ceremony in use in the Church, during the Prescript time of Penance; and also when Penitents were received into the Communion of the Church. The Custom was, that those of that state, after the earnest Prayers of the Congregation to God on their behalf, came and kneeled before the Bishop; who holding his Hands over their Heads, with his Blessing and Prayers to God for their Pardon, dismissed them before the Mysteries: This was called on their part *ὑπόκλισις*, or falling down, on his part *χειροθεσία*, or Imposition of Hands in Penance: The like Imposition of Hands was, when they conferred the Indulgence of.

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Reconciliation ; which was the admitting them to the Penance of the Church, and to full Communion with the Faithful. To this purpose, aniently some Offenders removed from the Church, could *not have hands laid on them as Penitents* ; could not be admitted to Penance, at least not till after some time : And others might not be *reconciled*, or restored to the Communion of the Church, till the Course of their Penance was gone thorough, which in some cases was a long space of time. I know this Text of the Apostle is generally understood in another Sense, as referring to *Ordination of Ministers* ; yet, for the same reason which he alledged, it may be extended to all Acts of the Church that are blessed by the Prayers thereof, with Imposition of hands. For if *Timothy* by imposing hands upon those whom he *ordains*, become accessary to their Sins, if they be unfit to be *ordained* ; by the same reason, if he impose hands ; that is, grant Penance to, or restore to the Communion of the Church, such as are not fit for it, he becomes accessary to the Sins, which they would probably have repented of and amended, had the Discipline of the Church been strict over them ; but which through his Remisness they may have neither repented nor forsaken. But I need

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not argue from Parity of Reason, that ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~ap~~ ^{ap} ~~ostle~~ ^{ostle} may be understood in this Sense, when the Context and Coherence of his Discourse oblige, that he be thus understood; for *ver. 20.* as you have seen, there is direction for the *Publick rebuking* of Offenders and censuring them; and *ver. 21.* a most solemn and strict charge to the same purpose, as also against *prejudging* on one side, and *partiality* or favour on the other. Whatever different Sense therefore, his words *Lay hands suddenly on no Man, &c.* may bear, if they may be interpreted in a Sense agreeable to the business in hand, which was *Church Censure*, they shall most properly be understood in it. Such is this, that *Timothy* should use *deliberation* and *delay*, in order to observe the Penitent's disposition and behaviour, before he admit him to Penance after Censure, and should by no means restore him to the Communion of the Church, before the sincerity of his Repentance and Reformation be approved to him; according as in the Primitive Practice and Canons, some Offenders were refused Penance, and most that were admitted to it, must exercise themselves for some space in good Works, before they were thought fit to be restored. In all which the Aim was that the Censure of Discipline might be effectual

effectual to its end, the Reformation of the Sinner and the saving his Soul; which was likely to come to pass, if Offenders under Censure were forced to seek *their place of Repentance*, i. e. room and place for themselves among Penitents in the Church, by such Humility and Sorrow as might be a Mortification of their Pride of Heart, and dispose them to *Sorrow unto Repentance*; and if also they could not be restored to the Communion of the Church, till the Course of their Repentance were seen performed in such a manner, as might give ground to think them with true Sorrow, and Contrition of Heart to have sought Reconcilement with God, and to be in the right way of obtaining it: But on the other hand very unlikely to come to pass, if the Discipline should not be strict, for the humbling of those that came to seek the Ministry of Reconciliation, and for constraining them to go through the course of Humiliation and Repentance, which that Ministry ought to prescribe, in order to their Reconciliation with God, and ought also to see performed, before it assure their hopes concerning such Reconciliation.

Now these Scriptures which we have thus inspected, affording us so many Instances of Acts done by the Apostles and

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the Disciples of our Lord, in pursuance of the Power given by him to his Church under the Figure of the *Keys of his House*, as also divers plain References to some Course and Order taken by the Apostles with the Churches of their Planting, for this Power to be exercised therein, for the Government of the same by a due Discipline, and likewise some direct and positive Orders of this nature, expressly charging that the power of the Ministry be employed to this purpose; we must be past doubt, that the Apostles in their time, understanding their Power in Christ, took order with the Churches, and delegated a Power to the Ministry thereof for Government and Discipline.

C H A P. IV.

THE Reasons hitherto advanced, therefore having as I think, made sufficient Proof, that the *Power of the Keys* was Exercised by the Apostles in the Government of the Church, and that they gave order for a Discipline in the Churches of their Planting, for the self-same purpose, with Power accordingly; I hold it
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convenient that the practice of Discipline according to them and the Churches in their time, which may be Collected in parts from the Scriptures that refer to, and point them out to us, be here placed together, and fitted for our view at once.

Now the Power of the Keys and Discipline that employeth it are visible : First, in *Baptism*, or the Admission of Disciples into the Church of Christ by that Ceremony. I mean, not in the Baptizing or Act of Admission it self, but in the way of Admission and Grant of that Sacrament, that is to say, in the preparing Men for, and in procuring in them the disposition that made them fit for that Admission, fit to have Baptism conferred on them; and in acting according to a Trust that must be supposed in the Power that was to do this, so as to judge in whom that Disposition was wrought, and who were fit Persons to be Admitted into the Church of Christ by this means. This is a Thing that hath not been yet under our consideration, because the Discipline which my design engaged me immediately to consider, is that which supposeth Men to be Christians, and is concerned to keep them such; nevertheless it is fit we take notice that there was a Discipline to instruct, and prepare such as offered themselves to the Church

for Baptism concerning the Profession they were to make therein, and their resolution to fulfil what they took upon them: and that this Discipline likewise had its beginning from the Apostles, and was grounded also on the *Power of the Keys*. For this appearing, there will appear with it the Reason and Ground of This, that is, the Subject of my present Argument. For, suppose a Power settled in the Church by God to judge who is fit to be Admitted into it, and a Discipline to prepare for that Admission, and the same Power enabled to Refuse such as shall be judged unfit; by the same reason shall there be a Discipline to Govern those that are within the Church, and keep them to their Profession, and Power to Exclude such as prove themselves unfit to be of the Church after they are Admitted to it. Be it observed then, that from the beginning there was a Power in the Church of judging whether Men were fit for its Baptism or not, as also a Discipline to bring them to be fit for it; and this Power of Baptizing was a different thing from the Office of Ministering it: The Trust of this Power indeed was generally lodged in the same hands that Ministered the Office, yet so as that Trust obliged them, not to confer Baptism but on such as were qualified

ed for it. This is what we in the present state of the Church do not distinguish, because all are born within the Pale of the Church, and by Order thereof Baptized Infants; But which we may see ground to distinguish, if we rightly consider the Words of our Lord, charging his Apostles to *make Disciples of all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, therein requiring them, first to bring Men to be Disciples, and then to Baptize them: that is, first to bring Men to submit to the Gospel, and to a Resolution of *doing God's Will*, according to our Lord's saying, that those that will *do his Father's Will are his Disciples*, and then to Admit them into the Church by Baptism. Which supposeth a judgment whether such submitted to the Gospel or not, and a Trust in those that Ministred Baptism, to judge of the same, and bring to pass what might be wanting, before they granted any Admission into the Church by that means. I take it to be from a sense of this Trust lodged within the Church as to Baptism, that our Church of *England* requireth a Contract and Stipulation on behalf of those whom it Baptizeth in their Infancy, and that it also giveth it in charge to all that have the Cure of Souls, to Instruct and Catechise all that were thus Baptized,

and prepare and fit them for *Confirmation* at which it requires all such *openly before the Church to Ratify and Confirm their Baptismal Engagement, and Promise that they will ever more endeavour themselves faithfully to observe the same.* But whether we take this to proceed from the sense of such a Trust or not, it plainly appeareth that there was such a Trust and Power lodged with the Church, and Proceedings accordingly in the time of the Apostles. For what *S. Peter* speaks of the *Answer of a good Conscience to God in Baptism, 1 Pet. 3. 21.* Sheweth, that in time of the Apostles, (which must therefore be upon their Order), Interrogatories were propounded to them that were to be Baptized, in the nature of a Contract between the Church and them, wherein they obliged themselves to live according to the Gospel as Disciples, and thereupon had Admission into the Church. This must be the Effect of a Trust in the Church to see those that were Baptized, first brought to a Resolution of living as Christians. *S. Peter* himself seems to have acted upon this Trust and Power, in giving order for the Baptizing of *Cornelius and his Friends.* Its true, there was a Prejudice in him and those of the Circumcision against them as *Gentiles*, which might make him backward to Baptize

Acts 10

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size such into the Church of Christ; tho' he had no Power to have refused Baptism to any; but if we observe, that Prejudice seems to have been removed by the Vision, upon which he resolved to go with the Messengers that *Cornelius* had sent for him; and not only so, but to *Cornelius* and those that were with him, *to hear all things that were Commanded him of God*; he makes no scruple to say, *of a Truth I perceive that God is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him*, and thereupon he Preacheth to them Christ Crucifi'd and giveth them hope out of the Prophets, that *whosoever Believeth in him should receive Remission of Sins*. When he reasoneth therefore after this, saying, *Can any Man forbid Water that these should not be Baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we*? And thereupon commanded them to be Baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus; Seemeth it not to be upon this Presumption, that they having visibly received the Holy Ghost after that manner upon his Preaching, would not be destitute of the Grace of the same Holy Spirit, to resolve and enable them, to live as God's People, and therefore might, and ought to be Received by Baptism into the Church of Christ? Which seemeth also yet more plainly to appear

Acts II.
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appear from what he argueth in defence of that which he had done in this matter to the Brethren at *Jerusalem*, when, relating his own Vision, and what *Cornelius* had told him of his having seen an Angel that bid him send for *Peter*, who should tell him words whereby he and his House should be saved, as also what came to pass as he was Preaching these Words to them, that the *Holy Ghost* fell on them, which brought to his remembrance the saying of the Lord, how that his followers should be *Baptized with the Holy Ghost*; he addeth thereupon, *Forasmuch then as God gave them the like Gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus, what was I, that I could withstand God?* that is to say, how could he refuse them Baptism, it appearing that God had given them the like Grace, as they who had so believed on the Lord Jesus, as to give themselves to be Gods' People, walking after his Will now according to Christ Jesus? And to this purpose it seemeth that he was understood by those of the Circumcision, who being silenced, and resting satisfied with what he had done, are said to have *Glorified God*, saying, Then hath God also to the *Gentiles* granted *Repentance* unto Life: concluding hence, that there was ground to think that they also would
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ough Grace repent of their wicked li-
g, and come to live as the People of
d, and thereby with them, attain to
fe Eternal. This maketh it a plain Case
me, that S. Peter, though at first, pre-
dicted as a Jew, against the Gentiles, did
t however dispute the Baptism of Cor-
thian and his Friends altogether upon ac-
count of that Prejudice, but as one entrust-
t with the Baptism of Christ, judged
ghly that they might, and accordingly,
ommanded them to be Baptized, having
round sufficient to presume that they
ould live as Christians who had recei-
ed the Holy Ghost in so visible a manner,
hat gift supposing the gift of Grace also
rom God for this purpose. But again,
what the Apostle speaks, *Heb. 6. 2.* of
he foundation of Repentance from dead
Works, the Doctrine of Baptism and Imposi-
tion of Hands, manifestly refers to that
which was a Custom in the Church, that
they which offered themselves to Baptism,
should be instructed in the Doctrine of the
Gospel, and prepared to enter into con-
tract with the Church on God's behalf,
to forsake such courses of the World as
were inconsistent with the Profession of
Holiness they were now to make. How
is the foundation of Christianity laid in Re-
pentance from Dead Works, but in shewing
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the necessity of this to prepare Men to become Christians? The *Doctrine of Baptism* also, doubtless signifying, that *Doctrine* or Summ of Christian Truth, which the *Catechumens* were taught before Baptism; called also the *Doctrine of Imposition of Hands*, because the use was, that they who came to be instructed by the *Catechist* were dimissed from him with *Imposition of Hands* and a Prayer, that they might in due time become good Christians. All visible marks of the Power of the Church in judging whether Men were fit for Baptism or not, and of a Discipline therein to fit them for it. If to this it be objected, that we read in Scripture of great numbers, *Three Thousand in a day added to the Church*, who could not be supposed to be thus Instructed and judged of; my Answer is, that what was done in cases where the extraordinary hand of God appeared in Men's Conversion, and at the beginning, before a Church was gathered to Christ, till after which there could not be Order; is not to be made an Objection against what there is manifest reason to suppose done afterwards when the Church came to be settled in a regular method, and course taken for the due execution of its Ministry according to Rule. The things afore said therefore being rightly consider'd,

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I do not think it will be denied me, that the Church had a Trust committed with the Power of granting Baptism, and that this Power being a Branch of that Power given by Christ, under the Figure of the Keys of his House, appeared, as did also its Discipline, in the Preparatory Instructions that were always used therein, to fit Men for its Baptism; and in the not granting this till after such Preparation, and granting it when there was reason to judge that they who sought it, were brought to such a disposition as had resolved them to undertake Christianity with a good Conscience; i. e. to be sincere in that undertaking.

And certainly if the Church found it self concerned by Discipline to prepare Men for its Baptism, and had Power to refuse the admitting such into the Church of Christ, whom it sees no Reason to hope well of, as to their sincerity in undertaking, or steadfastness in abiding by, what they must undertake as Christians; then it hath been concluded aright and well, that the Church is concerned by a Discipline to keep Men to the performance of what they took upon them, when they first made Profession of Christianity, and were admitted into the Church of Christ; and then also is the Power of excluding those,

those, who undertake this and perform it not, well grounded. Accordingly we find the Power and Discipline of the Church from the beginning, employed to this purpose; namely, in taking care of, and seeing to such as were esteemed worthy, as being qualified by professing a Resolution to do the Will of God, to be baptized into his Church, and were admitted accordingly, that they discharged that Profession and Resolution in their Lives. This was the Government of the Church in Godliness, frequently spoken of in Scripture, and given in charge to them whom the Holy Ghost had made Overseers in God's Church, when they were required to take heed to themselves and to their Flock, to rule with diligence, and to rule well the Church of God, to watch and labour in doing the work of their Ministry, as considering the end of the same towards the Children of God. But if any notwithstanding, professing that they knew God, in their works denied him, and were disobedient, then was there cause for the Church to make proof of its Ministry, as it did with Authority, admonishing, reproofing, rebuking such Sinners; yet this in meekness hitherto, trying to restore them if possible, and waiting if God peradventure would give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth, and

and that they might recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil. To this purpose was it given in charge, That if a Man were overtaken in a fault, the Spiritual should restore such an one in the Spirit of meekness. Also to such as were entrusted with the Ministry, to warn, to admonish, to charge, to exhort, reprove, rebuke as with authority, so with all long-suffering. But when these means could not work their Effect, so as to prevail with them that had sinned, to repent them of their wickedness; or when their wickedness was so foul as to be a Shame and Reproach to the Christian Religion, to leave no hope for God's favour to such Presumptuous Sinners; nor hope to the Church, as to the amendment of such, having profligate and *seared Consciences*; then did the Church make use of its Power in Christ, to cut off and exclude such Sinners from the Church of Christ; Thereby to make them sensible, that they were cut off from all hope and interest in God's Promises, relating to the forgiveness of Sins and Eternal Life; their Intrest in these being lost by their Relapse into Sins; which forsaking before in hope of God's Promises for these things the Church had allowed, and made them Partakers of according to its Power in Christ; but now by the same Power

Power excluded them from disannulling *all* their Hopes or pretended Intrest in God's Favour, or Mercy as forfeited and lost. This appeareth by what *S. Paul* did in the case of the *Incestuous Person* at *Corinth*, and *others* whom he *delivered to Satan*; by the blame he layeth on that Church, for neglect of duty in that they *had not put away him that had done that Evil deed from among them*; by his pressing them at length to do their duty in the case, in the executing of his Sentence, (which though it might have more in it, than barely the cutting off that Person from the Communion of the Church; yet whatsoever there might be more, was certainly at that time only the consequent of that Censure); by his threatening others *that had sinned, and should not have repented them of their wickedness*, that he would not spare them, when he should come to *Corinth*; that he would use sharpness according to the Power which the Lord had given him: by the charge given to those who were best in Trust with the Ministry, as particularly to *Timothy* and *Titus*, to rebuke with all authority, and to let none despise them, to make full proof of their Ministry, to rebuke them that Sin before all, that others might fear, and to act herein without prejudice, and without partiality; (with more of this nature, which

'tis needless to repeat here, having been already considered at large). But now even after this Censure, the Church still continued to have care as concerning the Effects of its Discipline, that it might be a means to bring such Sinners to *Sorrow* unto Repentance, that the *Spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord*: It waited therefore for, and watched what effect its Censure had on such Sinners, and in case they became sensible upon it of their Sin and Danger, and sought Peace with the Church, and Reconcilement with God, by the means of its Ministry; then did the Church take upon it self the care of *instructing them to Repentance*; and upon the Penitent's submitting to, and going thorough with that Course of Repentance, which upon the best judgment that could be made of the State, and Circumstances of the Sinner, and nature of the Offence was thought necessary; there was an abatement or Relaxation of the Censure, the Penitent's Sorrow and Repentance, appearing. This is seen in what *S. Paul* did at *Corinth*, upon the Submission and Sorrow of the *Incestuous* Person, whom he had before put under Censure, whom as I said before, the Apostle seems to have admitted to Penance, in order to his being restored, or (as more commonly that act

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of his is understood) to have granted full Reconcilement with the Church, as thinking and judging him to have *sorrowed after a godly sort*, and so by his True Repentance to be in the way of obtaining Reconciliation with God also. Only in case the Sin were very great, such as necessarily implied the Offender to be of a profligate Conscience, and unlikely to become a True Penitent; or the guilt such as it could not be supposed the Divine Mercy would easily forgive, or as the Church could not readily admit to the hope of forgiveness, but it must be liable to scandal in its Ministry, as giving countenance to Sin; the Church then found it self under a necessity to use great deliberation in the admitting such Offenders to Penance, and to prescribe a long course of Penance, and see it gone through in such a manner, as might give some Presumption of the Penitent's sincerity, and of a change in the Hearts of such, before the Censure were taken off; and in some cases it was not thought fit at all to admit the Offenders so much as to Penance, to any hope or means of Reconciliation with the Church; but to leave them altogether to the Mercy of God, and to the bewailing of their Sins, if peradventure God might give them Repentance and shew them

them Merry. Therefore as I said was it given in charge to *Timothy*, that he should *Lay hands suddenly on no Man, neither be partaker of other Mens Sins*; Spoken doubtless in reference to Imposition of hands in Penance, (a way of Benediction used in reconciling Sinners to the Church) to intimate to him, that if this were hastily done without care to procure in such true Repentance, and without knowledge of its being wrought in them, upon himself would lie much of the guilt of such Sins, as those Sinners thinking themselves in the way of Salvation, by being admitted to the Station of Penitents, or restored to the Communion of the Church thus easily, might continue to live in, and on him also would be chargeable the mischiefs which such disorder and scandal must occasion in the Church, to the prejudice of true Religion and Godliness. And to this purpose also is that of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he saith, *It was impossible, that those who fell away after having been once enlightened, and having tasted of the Heavenly gift, and been partakers of the Holy Ghost, &c.* which must suppose their Sin Presumptuous, and done in *despite of God's grace*, should be renewed again to Repentance; to wit, by the Church; to let such Sinners know

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that they must not expect the Church to give them any assurance of their Reconciliation with God after such Sins. As that of *S. John* concerning the *Sin unto Death*, *not to be prayed for*, intimateth that the Church might not take upon it to do in this as in other cases; *i. e.* to intercede with God by Prayers on their behalf, as for other Sinners; Sins of so great a guilt being utterly inconsistent with the hope of Salvation, which hope therefore it became not the Church to give unto such Sinners; but leave them to expect what God might do of his Infinite and Extraordinary Mercy, and deny them the hope usually given to other Penitents, to make such wretched Sinners the more solicitous and humble in bewailing their Sins, and to deter others the more, that they might not dare or presume to do wickedly in such manner. This was the Practice and Method of Discipline, according to the Apostles and in the Churches of their time; which the several Parts thereof referred to in several Scriptures occasionally, being put together make out.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

LET us but compare now the Practice of the Primitive Church, with this that we find done in time of the Apostles, and as the Correspondence will be clear, so that Correspondence will clear up to us the Practice pointed and referred to in the Scriptures, (that have been considered by us) to be such, as we have conceived it from the hints and intimations given us therein.

Now the Primitive Discipline was this. The Church as looking on it self under a Trust by having the Power of Baptism, did therefore concern it self to engage all those, who embraced Christianity, to a Profession thereof, and a Resolution to live after it; and upon these terms only would the Church admit Men by its Baptism into the House of God. For this purpose, as it demanded of those who were baptized, that they solemnly renounced the Vices of the Age, and the wicked courses of the World; so did it take care on behalf of them that had been won to believe the Truth of Christianity, that they should be instructed as in Chri-

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 might be seen whether in likelihood they
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 the Church might conceive that they would
 not betray the Profession thereof, before
 they were admitted to Baptism. During
 this time of Trial these Scholars and
 Learners of Christianity, were Catechised
 and instructed not only what to believe,
 but how to behave themselves as Christians,
 admitted to converse among Christians, to
 come to their Assemblies, and to be present
 and bear part in some of the things of
 God's Service; as in the Praises of God,
 and hearing the Scriptures Read and Ex-
 pounded, and were dismissed with the
 Church's Prayers; that by God's Grace
 they might be resolved to make a good Pro-
 fession and to be good Christians. This
 appears in *Clemens Alexandrinus* his *Pæda-
 gogus*, in the *Apostolical Constitutions*, and

in

in many other Writers of Church Matters; but especially in the distinct Offices of the Church, called *Missa Catechumenorum*, and *Missa Fidelium*, the former, That part of the Office of the Church, which the *Catechumens*, the *Scholars*, or *Probationers* in Christianity were admitted to, the latter, That which was Peculiar to Believers; that is, those that were *Baptized Christians*. There was some difference as to the time for these to be instructed upon what terms they might expect to be saved by Christ, and for Trial of their Conversation, in reference to the Profession they were to make, when they came to be Baptized; some Churches appointing it longer, others shorter; but in all Churches a Time was appointed, and means Preparatory for this purpose, and Baptism not granted otherwise, unless a Man's Zeal to Christianity were found extraordinary, so that there could be no Reason to suspect or doubt his sincerity; for then the Regular time of continuing in the State and Rank of a *Catechumen*, or Scholar in Christianity was frequently abridged by the Church; there being cause for such to be received without farther Trial. Moreover, there were Constitutions and Orders which required Extraordinary Trial of some Persons, as particularly of those

that had practised any sort of **Magick**, that it might be certain they had parted with such Superstitions altogether, before they should be admitted into the number of Christians; and likewise that Men of some particular Professions, and Trades of Life, should not be admitted to Baptism, unless they would profess to leave them, as inconsistent with Christianity: For instance, such as lived by the Stews, by the Stage, by Soothsaying and Fortune-telling, &c. For in as much as no Man could be Baptized, but he must undertake to live like a Christian, these therefore could not be admitted into the Church, without promise to leave those ways of Life in the World, which the Church must reasonably think, would if they were not left, engage them in wicked Practices. This Practice shews the Primitive Church to have looked on it self to have a Power to judge who were fit to be admitted to its Baptism, and not only so, but to have a Trust that none might be admitted, but such as were duly qualified by a Resolution of renouncing all wicked ways, and the undertaking of God's Service, to be admitted to the hope of his Favour and Grace: Forasmuch as the Acts of the Church in this case were the same, as we must suppose them to have been, had never

yet so plain a charge been given concerning this Trust and Power.

Now this Power and Trust of Admitting into the Church by Baptism, and bringing Men to make a Profession of Christianity at their Admission into the Church of Christ, supposing by consequence of right Reason, the like Power and Trust as to all those who Professed themselves Christians, to keep them to their Profession; and as to those who should fall into sins destructive of Christianity, and contrary to their first Covenant with God and his Church, to put these into danger of being excluded again from the House of God, and even actually to exclude them, if there should not be hope of their amendment, and not to restore them to the Advantages and Privileges of God's Church, until they should give better satisfaction of their Sincerity in Christianity: For this purpose we find a Discipline in the Primitive Church, (grounded as upon the Practice and Order of the Apostles, so upon knowledge of its own Power in Christ, who gave to his Church the Keys of his House) and Exhortations, Admonitions, Reproofs, and Censures, employed in respect of those that had visibly transgressed their Christian Profession, to bring them to acknowledge their

their Offences, and constrain them to take course for their Repentance and Amendment. This is to be seen in *Tertullian's* Words, *Apolog. Cap. 39.* Speaking thus of their Assemblies. *Ibidem etiam Exhortationes, Castigationes & Censura Divina: nam & judicatur magno cum pondere ut apud certos de Dei conspectu, &c.* There also are Exhortations, Reproofs, and the Censure of God; for judgment is given with great weight, as among Men assured of God's sight. He could not have said this, had it not been known and customary for such Exhortations, Reproofs, and Censures to be at their Assemblies, for Remedy of the Faults of such among them, who lived not as Christians, and for their Amendment for the future. He speaks in the same place of a Man's Offending so *ut à Communicatione Orationis & Conventus, & omnis Sancti commercii relegatur*, so as to be confined from the Communion of Prayers and Assemblies, and all holy Commerce. Which is a plain Proof that the Church in his time accounted it self to have Power thus to Censure Refractory Sinners, and did so Censure them. Which also appears more plainly in the Contest which *Montanus* and *Tertullian* himself (who followed *Montanus* herein) had with the Church, that the Crimes of Apostacy and Adultery should not be admitted to Penance

nance, or to any hopes of Reconcilement with God by means of the Church. This Dispute must necessarily suppose a Discipline in the Church that put away these and other Sinners from the Church, until they should Repent them of their Wickedness, as also, that Penance was the way and means by which such sinners as were put out of the Church might be restored to its Communion again, and that this way was appointed of necessity, because the Church could not re-admit such Sinners to its Communion, until there were ground to think that by Repentance they had recovered God's Favour, forfeited by their Sins. These things, I say, are plainly supposed in the Dispute, let it be, that these great Crimes, about which the Dispute was, might, or might not be Reconciled by Penance: and even as to these, the Dispute supposeth a Discipline in the Church that cut them off from its Communion, to which it would not allow them by Penance to be Restored: And had there not been a Discipline to this purpose, they might with much more reason have contended with the Church for suffering such to abide within it, than for restoring them by means of Penance. The Church nevertheless having discharged its Duty, in removing from it all such as were guilty . of

of such Sins, would not suffer the Austerity which *Montanus* and his Followers Affected, to be Imposed upon it for a Rule; For though it was understood, there was cause to fear that the Church, in warranting Pardon to those who might not prove qualified for it, might become chargeable with their Sins, according to *S. Paul*, *Lay hands suddenly on no Man, nor partake in other Men's Sins*; and that *S. John*, and the Apostle to the *Hebrews* seemed to direct the Church to make difficulty of re-admitting such Sinners; yet it was concluded, that upon the Example of *S. Paul*, who had re-admitted the Incestuous Person at *Corinth*, as reasonably satisfied of the Truth of his Repentance, the Church likewise might re-admit them to its Communion, or to Penance; the means of Reconcilement, when they made suit for it, and should have gone through such a course of Humiliation as might shew them truly Penitent. But yet, still the Church, that it might be able better to answer its Trust to God, in not warranting the Pardon of Sin without reasonable Tryal of Repentance, took a course of lengthning the time of Penance, during which, the Conversation of the Penitent might yield assurance of it, and this according to the Nature of Men's Sins, not allowing some

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Reconcilement with the Church till the point of Death: The Reason which *Montanus* and his Followers urged, That great Sins might not be admitted to Reconcilement with the Church, That such Sinners might not think it a small matter to Offend in such manner, nor that God's Pardon might be soon obtained, prevailing with the Church not to suffer such Sinners to be lightly admitted, that from the difficulty of their Penance and Admission, they might be convinced of difficulty in Repenting of such Sins, and difficulty of re-gaining God's Favour, or the hope of his Favour after them: and that those, and all others might in that respect fear to Offend. After those times, when the Customs of the Church in force, before they came in Writing, came to be reduced into Writing for Unity-sake, and considered in Synods and Councils; we find several *Canons* or Rules, prescribing concerning Discipline and Penance, wherein it was provided, that Persons notoriously wicked should be removed from the Communion of Christians, and in case of their committing great Sins, inconsistent altogether with the Christian Faith and Hope, utterly excluded and cut off from the Church, and not to be restored, untill after Submission to Penance, which was, such Acts
of

of Humiliation, Mortification, Self-denial, and Charity, as were thought useful to work such Sinners to a true Repentance, and might give ground to the Church to presume that they were in a way of obtaining God's Favour and Mercy for Pardon of their Sins, and so fit to be Reconciled to the Church, and Re-admitted to its Communion, which gave hope of Pardon to Sinners through Christ Jesus. Some of these Canons so Excluded great Sinners, as Apostates, Adulterers, &c. as that they might not be Admitted to the Peace of the Church in a long space of time; some years were required to precede their Reconciliation, and these to be spent in a course of Penance: And in case of Relapse, if any such Penitents fell into the same, or a like grievous Crime the second time, they required such should do Penance until Death. In the Re-admission of Penitents, the Ancient Church was always very careful that its Discipline had its effect to make the Sinner Penitent, as also desirous to discharge the Obligation it saw it self to lie under, of not warranting forgiveness of Sin, but upon due grounds. Upon this Account (according to the Practice) it concerned the Penitent in the first place to make suit to be Admitted, and to declare himself Sorry for,

for, and Offended at himself for what he had done, before he could obtain of the Church to be Admitted to his Penance. Which being granted, and he having undertaken the Penance imposed upon him; in the next place he was Admitted to the Prayers of the Church (at all the Solemn Assemblies of the Church during the time of his Penance) with Imposition of hands, as the mean to obtain Pardon at God's hands; for Imposition of hands in the Ancient Practice was not the Absolution of the Penitent, but the way to it, and capacity of it, signifying the Church's Prayer, for the time that such continued in doing their Penance, for God's Blessing upon the Means in use, to work in them a sincere Repentance, and that so it would please God to pardon their sin. And thus the time of the Penance being completed, the Sinner being supposed a true Convert, was restored to Communion with the Church in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The ground of this seems to me well expressed in the Words of S. Cyprian, (though upon an occasion different) *Qui fidei & veritati præsumus, eos qui ad fidem & veritatem veniunt & agentes Pœnitentiam remitti sibi peccata postulant, decipere non debemus & fallere: Sed correctos à nobis ac reformatos ad regnum Cœlorum Disciplinis cœlestibus*

cœlestibus erudire. We that are over the Faith and Truth, must not deceive those that come to the Faith and Truth, and during Penance, desire their Sins to be remitted: But instruct them, amended and reformed by us, to the Kingdom of Heaven, with Heavenly Discipline. The Church being entrusted with the power of Discipline, for bringing Sinners to Repentance, might neither deceive them nor betray its Trust; but must see therefore that end obtained, the Repentance of the Sinner wrought, and the sincerity of that his Repentance evident after a manner, before it might restore such to Communion with the Church. This produced, the Canons fixing a time for Penance, as also the Rules, assigning several places or stations for the Penitents, in which they were to testify their Repentance, and so by passing through them one after another be reconciled by degrees, into the Church. And the only reason of this strictness being to obtain the End of Discipline, that is, the Sinner's Repentance, and to secure the Church from Guilt, as to God, from which it could not be free in his sight, should it be guilty of so great a fault in its Ministry, as to restore to the Communion of the Church, any that it should not first have Instructed, and wrought to Repentance.

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Therefore, many times when Penitents demonstrated a more than ordinary Zeal and eagerness, in detesting the Offences thro' which they had failed, or in taking revenge upon themselves for their Transgressions ; or did some eminent act of Piety which testified the sincerity of their Conversion, and gave ground to the Church thereby, to think them qualified for Remission of Sin as to God ; the Regular time of their Penance was abated ; upon the same consideration as I said before, the Time for Persons continuing in the Rank or State of Catechumens was shortned and Baptism granted, when the Church had ground to presume of their sincerity in the Profession then to be made. Thus in this case the Discipline of Penance being to no other purpose, than to oblige Sinners to take that Course, whereby they may appear to the Church qualified for Remission of Sin ; this once appearing, the consideration thereof so took place with the Church, as that the Severity of its Discipline was abated upon it. Inso-much that those strict Canons that enjoined so many Years of Penance for divers great Sins, seem to have been but Threatnings, inviting Sinners to shew that Zeal in Conversion from Sin, as that the Church might have cause to be satisfied of their inward Repentance. M This

This being the Practice, and this the Aim of Penance in the Primitive Church ; let any Man now compare this the Original and general Practice of the Church, with that which we have in the Apostles writings pointed out unto us ; and say, by the agreement, whether their Authority were the beginning of it or not. Say, how a Practice so correspondent in all its parts should have been in the Church otherwise : How it should fall out that the Scriptures considered by us should so exactly point out the Primitive Discipline, unless the Apostles had taken order for it in the Churches of their planting, and from thence it continued afterwards : How the same Discipline should prevail through the whole Church ; insomuch that there was no Church but what had a Discipline of Penance, and all Churches agreed in its use and design to one purpose, but that it was understood the Church stood charged with the Ministry of this Discipline from Christ and his Apostles, and was obliged to make use of its Power in Christ against such, as having undertaken to live after Christianity when they were Baptized, failed of that undertaking, and departed from that Holy Profession, upon the account of which they were first admitted to be Members of Christ's Church:

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How it should happen, that the only difference which was in the primitive Church about Penance, as to the reconciling of some Sins great and heinous, should fall out to be in an instance where the strictness of the Apostles Rules obliging the Church to make difficulty of re-admitting such Sinners, and *S. Paul's* own example nevertheless abating of that strictness, in a particular case, upon his receiving satisfaction of the Sorrow and Repentance of the Guilty Person, seem at first sight to be contradictory to each other, so as the former to give advantage to one Party in the Dispute, and the latter to the other; and that these Scriptures should be alledged on either side, and allowed to refer to the matter of Penance, and that Pardon which the Church might or ought to give or not give, only the Church that was in the right, excepting that the Scriptures alledged by the contrary Party, served not to prove what they would have; but that the Church might follow *S. Paul's* example, on like certain evidence of the Sinner's *Sorrow to Repentance*, and provided the Church took a due care to bring the Sinner to that Sorrow and Repentance, and to make him sincere therein: How all this should come to pass, but that the Church understood the Apostles

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in these Scriptures, as referring to the Practice of the Church in their time, and that their Orders and their Practice were a Rule for the Church to follow in all times, according as the same should appear in the Scriptures or otherwise; and so this dispute fell out to be in a case where the Apostles Rules and Practice seemed not so clear, 'till the Reason of the case came into consideration; which was this, that there ought to be difficulty in the Church's re-admitting of such Sinners; because so great Sins are not without difficulty repented of, the Mind and Conscience of such Sinners being depraved, and defiled in an extraordinary manner; but nevertheless Repentance being possible, supposing it once to be, and that the Church took sure care to bring it to pass, *S. Paul's* Example might be followed, in abatement of the strictness of the Rule.

There is one Thing more in the Primitive Practice of Penance, which I must not omit to take notice of (because there may be occasion to make some use of it, when we shall have under consideration the Benefit and Advantages of Discipline). It is this, That Private Persons, (discerning what great benefit redounded to the Penitents, by their being instructed by the Church to Repentance, in the time of
their

their Penance; and finding their own Consciences burdened with the like Sins, which being carried in Secrecy, were not subject to the Censures of the Church) were wont therefore, as well for the subduing of the Stubborness of their hard Hearts, and the furthering their deeper Humiliation, as for the assuring themselves of the sincerity of their Repentance, and obtaining thereby quiet of Mind and peace of Conscience, to Submit themselves to the Church's Discipline herein, and undergo the burden of publick Confession and Penance, when it was thought necessary by him to whom such secret Faults were first discover'd, that they should be brought to the publick notice of the Church, and that the Church's Direction in the Penance, and the Prayers thereof were the best Remedy for the Cure. And we find *Tertullian*, in his Book *de Pœnitentiâ* very earnest in persuading Christians, of their own Will to undergo this Penance, and *Cyprian*, *Origen*, and others advising to bring their Secret Sins to the Church for Cure. It seems as tho' there were ground for this Practice in the Direction that *S. James* gives, that the Sick should send for the *Elders of the Church to Pray over them*, promising forgiveness of Sins upon their Prayers; from which course, if Benefit might be expected in dan-

ger of Death, much more in time of ~~Weakness~~.
 That Apostle indeed, when he ~~proceedeth to~~
 say, *Confess your Sins to one another, and*
Pray for one another, may be understood to
 direct our confessing our Sins to one ~~an-~~
 other as well as to the Priests of the Church,
 but this is on a supposition, that the cure
 of sin is known to all Christians, that God,
 who is offended thereby, must be ~~brought~~
 to for Pardon, and that his Pardon is ~~not~~
 to be obtained but by a serious Humilia-
 tion and a sincere Repentance; and as a
 Man that has no Trouble, nor Guilt of
 Conscience upon him, may be better able
 to advise one under such circumstances,
 than he to advise himself, so the Skill and
 Fidelity of a private Christian may Furnish
 his Brother with a good Cure for his Sin,
 by putting him in the way of Repentance,
 and he may by his Prayers be assisting to
 him also therein; which may be a good
 reason why Christians should confess their
 faults one to another, in respect of benefit
 which they may have from this, and why
 it should be enjoined as it is by *S. Paul* on
 private Christians, to *restore* him that is
 surprized in Sin; and yet all this shall
 afford a greater Reason, why Confession
 of our Secret Sins should be made to the
 Church, and offered to the Cure of the
 more skilful Physician, the Church being
 best

best able to direct us in the way of Repentance, and its Prayers prevalent with God beyond the Prayers of a private Brother, as this also may much better assure us of the sincerity of our Repentance, and give greater comfort to our Minds after we have gone through the course appointed for our obtaining God's Pardon, and as in every respect, the operation and effect of God's Ministry in the Church must be accounted greater than that which a private Christian may do for the good of Souls. But this however seems to have been good Advice, and not Precept, for that a Man's own Skill and Fidelity to his own Salvation may possibly furnish him his Cure at home; in which respect there's no necessity for a Man to confess his Sin to his Brother, though it may be of good use to him, nor to the Church, though that be certainly of more. The Obligation that lieth upon a Sinner to this purpose being such as doth not suppose, but that his Sin may possibly be cured otherwise; and yet, that it may best, and most effectually be cured by the Ministry of God's Church. So that it lyeth upon the Conscience before God, that such an one both know that which must be done in the Work of Repentance, and voluntarily charge himself with that Humiliation which may

Mortify in himself those Passions and Lusts that caused him to Sin afore, and make his Profession sincere for the future ; and therein supply to himself the Work and Effect of the Church's Ministry : or that he seek to that Ministry which God has provided, to cleanse and cure his Sin.

But I return to consider the proof that has been made of a Discipline in the Church, obliging Christians to a course of Repentance for their known Transgressions ; being that which hath shewn them what lieth upon themselves to do, that they may get clear of Guilt lying upon their Consciences for secret Sins ; but which God hath appointed to be executed by the Ministers of his Church, to constrain them to Penance for such Sins as they are known to have committed, contrary to their Duty as Christians, and to the good Profession they made when they were first admitted into the Church of Christ. Now the proof given is a connection of Arguments that take hold of, and are linked one into the other so close and firm, that they hold or break altogether. It hath been shewn, That the Institution of Discipline is from Christ, who gave Power and Authority for that purpose to his Church, under the Figure of the Keys, for the opening a Door in his House,

House, to Let in and Admit such as desired, and would make themselves fit for Admission therinto; and for the shutting that Door against others, that must be removed and put forth thence, (nothing being to be suffered to abide therein, as nothing to enter that defileth). And that the Opening and giving Admittance into the Church of Christ implying an Admittance to the Hope of God's Pardon as to our Sins; and on the other hand, the Shutting out and Excluding from the Church of Christ implying an Exclusion, and Shutting out from the hope of God's Promises, in that respect, the Effect of the use of the Keys in the way of Discipline, which removeth Notorious Sinners from the House and Church of God, and refuseth to Re-admit them till their Repentance appear, is very properly express'd in that, which according to our Saviour's Intent, should be the Effect of the Power of the Keys given to his Church, Namely, the *Binding* and *Loosing*, and *Remitting* and *Retaining Sins*. As also, That our Saviour's Words, *Tell the Church*, and the Obligation therein presumed on all to *hear the Church*, as to what this might Admonish them about their Faults, and the further implication of that which the Church must proceed to in *Binding* or *Loosing*, according

according as Men shall *hear or not hear* the Church, in reference to what may have been done by them contrary to their Duty as Christians, do certainly shew a Power lodged in the Church, to take Cognizance of what Men may do contrary to their Duty, and a necessity of Submission to the Church's Authority, in *hearing* what that shall think fit to Direct or Admonish there-upon; and that Mens Sins are bound upon them, if the Church shall proceed to Censure their Crimes, because it cannot prevail with them to amend. And, That the Practice of the Apostles making use of their Power in Christ to this purpose, and the Orders, which it appears by several Passages of Scripture they took with the Churches of their Planting to Act accordingly, that is to say, to call the Professors of Christianity to Account for what should be done by them contrary to that Profession; to Admonish, Rebuke, and Reprove their Faults; to Remove, and put away from the Church of God, the Disobedient, and Disorderly; are both an Argument that they understood our Lord Christ to have given his Church a Power of this nature. as also, a sufficient Precedent to the Church of Christ to Act upon the same Power for the same Purposes in all times. It hath been also shewn, what

What the Practice of Discipline was in the Time of the Apostles, and in the Churches of their Planting; and that the Apostles both informed the Churches of their Power in Christ for this purpose, and gave charge concerning the same. As also, that the Discipline of the Church in the Primitive time was in all respects correspondent to that, which appear'd to be the Practice of the Apostles, and of their Order: The Primitive Church, which being nearest the Fountain, is to be supposed to have best understood the meaning of the Scriptures, either thence deriving the Grounds and Method of that Discipline which it Exercis'd, or, as I rather think, Regulating its Practice, (which had its beginning from Tradition, and Unwritten Orders of the Apostles, left with the several Churches of their Planting) according to that which appear'd in their Writings concerning their Practice or Orders about this Matter.

If therefore any Man shall go about to overthrow this Proof; it shall not be enough to do it, that he can put another sense upon the Words of our Saviour, which we have supposed to be the foundation of the Church's Power in this case, but he must shew that they are not capable of being understood in the sense that hath here been pleaded

pleaded for; and that the Apostles and the Churches of their time, acting according to such a Power as hath been supposed given by our Saviour therein, is nothing of an Argument why we should so understand them. Nor shall it suffice to advance some other meaning of those Texts cited out of *S. Paul's*, and the other Epistles, unless that meaning be free from contradiction, and unless it can be shewn withal that those Scriptures have no intent to speak of, or refer to Discipline or Penance in the Church, and that no such then were. For otherwise, admitting Discipline and Penance to have been, there will be no reason but to suppose an intent in the Scriptures to speak of it, and then the agreement in this meaning of the Scriptures to Historical Truth, will justify it, even to common Sense: Nor shall it be enough to say, that Ecclesiastical Discipline came to effect in the Primitive Church by the consent of Christians, at a time when the Church wanted the Assistance of the Civil Magistrate. For this is presumption enough, that it was not only the Consent of Christians that gave beginning to it, That we find no beginning of that Consent among the Churches, yet find that in all Churches there was a Discipline; And therefore 'tis reasonable to think

think it must have been from the Apostles, otherwise it would not have been universal. And when we see such hints of, and references to, yea, and Orders concerning it in their Writings, and the Primitive Church understanding these Texts of Scripture to this purpose, and Appealing to them in Vindication of its Practice, I do not perceive it can be made a Question, whether the Primitive Church received it from them. It was indeed the Consent of Christians that gave Effect to the Discipline of the Church in those Times, but admitting the Apostles to have taken Order for it in the Churches, and Christ to have given his Church a Power for this purpose, they could not have been Christians, had they not consented and concurred with the Church for bringing it to Effect. The Church, its true, in the beginning, had no Favour nor Protection from the Civil Powers; but I see not wherein it can be pretended, that its Discipline was appointed for that reason. The only thing that can be offered towards it, is, that the *Jews* devised first Excommunication after their Captivity, making use thereof in their dispersion, while they were under Foreign Powers, not having any Precept for it in the Law of *Moses*. And this I take to be True, that the *Jews*
(desiring

(desiring, as they ought, to maintain God's Law, by which they were to be Governed but not having the power of inflicting Penalties requisite to maintain it, after their own Civil Government was destroyed) devised this Course, as seeming to them reasonable and necessary, that such as would not observe the Law, should be deprived of the privilege of a Jew, and shut out from the Conversation of his Native People, either in whole, or in part, according as his Offence was. But nevertheless, it is not to be thought, but that this came in force in the Church by the Act of our Lord Christ and his Apostles, Founding his Church, and giving it this Power, and requiring it to be put in Practice, this appearing in the Scriptures of the New Testament, and an Alteration also appearing as to the Use and Design of Excommunication, which among the *Jews* was a Civil Penalty only, but in the *Christian Church* serveth to Spiritual purposes. Well and good it may be thought, that there being a Custom of this Nature in the Synagogue, our Saviour Christ framing his Church as near as might be to the pattern of the Synagogue, preserving the difference between the Spiritual and Legal Service of God, appointed therefore a like Proceeding, for to keep Christians within the Bounds of their

their Duty, but giving Power from God, to make the Discipline of his Church Effectual beyond that of the *Jews*, and to serve more Spiritual Ends: as he was pleased to do in another case; namely, in Appointing Baptism, (which was a Ceremony used by the *Jews* in their Admission of Profelytes of the *Gentiles*, to Live among them and resort to their Temple for the Worship of the God of *Israel*) to be a Rite in his Church for the Admission of such as desired to be Members thereof, but this, with power from himself making it of another Effect, and to serve other more Spiritual purposes than the *Jews* used, or pretended it for. So that though Excommunication were only of Humane Institution among the *Jews*, and designed to serve a present Turn, and supply their not having power to Execute the Law of *Moses* whilst they were dispersed among other Nations, and whilst they were under the Government of Strangers in their own Land; it shall not thence follow, that Excommunication is no other in the Church of Christ, nor that it was taken up for no other purpose, and must be laid aside when the occasion of that purpose ceaseth: But as it had its beginning in the Church from our Lord Christ and his Apostles, so that which may appear of their purpose in

in doing it, shall determine its use in the Christian Church, and its continuance shall be necessary as long as these purposes remain, to which it may be useful.

C H A P. VI.

HERE is the place for me to take notice of the usefulness of Discipline in the Church of Christ, and of that Power and Authority which Excludeth Sinners from it. Now there can be no doubt of the usefulness hereof in any Man that rightly considers the Ends designed therein, and looks upon it as sufficient for the accomplishment of those Ends: There be many I know in the World, who finding not the Church endued with any Temporal Power, to enforce by way of Constraint, that Discipline it pretendeth to Exercise, or those Censures which pass therein against Offenders, do for that very Reason think and speak Contemptuously of this Institution of the Gospel; But a True Christian, that looketh upon our Lord Christ as having power over the Souls and Consciences of Men, will think him able to give Power and Efficacy to this as well

well as other Spiritual Institutions of his Gospel, when Administred in his Name, and according to his Mind and Will, though the Power thereof being Spiritual, appear not to us in the way of its Operation, but only as when the Effect is wrought, it appeareth to have had its Operation on the Consciences of Men by the Power of Christ. It was on this Account that S. Paul 1 Cor. 10. 4. Speaking of the Power and Authority of his Apostleship, and the Instruments of his Ministry acting against sin and sinners, saith, *The Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal, but Mighty through God, to the pulling down of Strong Holds, casting down Imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth it self against the knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every thought to the Obedience of Christ: that is, The Discipline and Censures of the Church are not Weak and Contemprible, but Mighty, such as have a Force, through the Power of God upon the Conscience, for the Beating down all the Fortifications which Sin may have Raised in Men's Hearts to Defend it self there, and Subduing the most Refractory Offenders. Let Credit be given to S. Paul in this which he saith of this Act of the Ministry, that it is Mighty through God, a Divine Force accompanying it to render it Effectual up-*
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on Men's Consciences, and the usefulness therof cannot but appear from the Ends designed it in the Church of Christ, and its effectually serving those Ends, indeed the necessity of it will hence appear. Among the known Ends of Discipline in the Church the principal is the bringing of Sinners to Repentance, and to this End, of all the Means in the Gospel Ministry, this is the most Efficacious. *Preaching* may shew Men the guilt of Sin, and convince them, that without Repentance and Conversion, there is no Remission of Sin, nor hope of Everlasting Life: yet whilst Sinners are suffered to live in the Society of the Faithful, and left to themselves to set upon the Work of Repentance at their own time, and to satisfy themselves only as to their sincerity therein, it is to be feared, they may endeavour to Reconcile the Hopes of Heaven with the Enjoyment of their Lusts; they may not be very strict in searching into themselves and their hearts, touching the sincerity of their Conversion, nor very severe upon themselves in taking Revenge upon themselves for that wherein they may have presumptuously sinned; But being admitted to the same privileges with other Members of the Church, may presume on God's Grace and Mercy; and though they continue in Sin,

Sin, think nevertheless that they are as good Christians, and have as much right to Salvation as others, which is a most dangerous, but withal, a most common Imagination. But when Discipline and the Power which God hath given the Church over them that Transgress the Profession of Christianity after they have made it, shall be employed to procure the Repentance of Sinners, to constrain them to a course that may be effectual to Repentance; to instruct them in the work, and by meet helps forward them in it, or Exclude them from the Communion of the Church if they refuse it, and therein disallow their Hopes, and pretensions to God's Favour and Mercy, forasmuch as they have departed from that Profession which is the ground of a Christian's Confidence in God through Jesus Christ: Men must be very much hardned in Sin, if when the Church *Rebukes them with Authority*, they will not be Reclaimed; if they refuse the course of Repentance when they see they shall *not be spared*, but that the Church hath power *in readiness to Revenge their Disobedience*, as S. Paul's Expression is; or at least, if when the Church shall not think fit to allow them to partake with other Christians in the Sacrament that assures the Benefits of Christ, they become not hence concerned

to assure and recover by repentance their hope in him; especially if finding themselves under the Power of Satan, by being cast out of the Church of Christ, his Terror, the Terror of their own Circumstances, and the Terrors of the Lord, have not an influence on their Minds, so as to occasion their Sorrowing unto Repentance. It was this Sorrow, even such as produced Repentance to Salvation, according to God, wrought by the Censure inflicted on the Incestuous Person at *Corinth* by *S. Paul's* Epistle. And tis reasonable to think, that the Repentance of Sinners will, in likelihood be more sincere and durable by their going through the prescribed Penance, and having not only the Instructions, but Prayers also of the Church to assist them, and obtain the assistances of God's Spirit for them, to make their Repentance Effectual. It is not every one that is sensible what measure of Humiliation and Mortification is necessary to subdue the Corruptions and Lusts of a Heart desperately wicked, nor is it every one that knows it, that will of himself undergo that Humiliation and Mortification that is necessary: But the course of Humiliation, which the Church prescribeth, humbleth the Hearts of Sinners, that they repent with perfect Repentance. There
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are not many that think it a difficulty to recover the Favour of God after wilful Sins, nor that are apprehensive that there is difficulty for a Man to assure himself, that the resolution of his Heart to live after God's Will for the future is sincere, or will be effectual and durable : But when the Discipline of the Church removeth those Sinners from the Church that visibly fail of the Profession made at their Baptism, and maketh difficulty to Re-admit them, till they shall have given satisfaction of the sincerity of their Repentance ; this must shew Sinners that they are not lightly to presume for the pardon of those Sins, which the Church can hardly presume that a Man can repent him of enough ; and that the renewing the Heart to a sincere and lasting Resolution of this kind is no easie nor slight Work, which the Ministry of the Church has so much ado to bring about, by a long and strict course of Penance. Besides, Discipline in the Church is useful to more than those upon whom it is immediately exercised. *S. Paul* intimates to *Timothy*, that if they that sin are *Rebuked before all*, others will fear to sin in like manner ; will have fear also in respect of their secret Sins, which being known to God and their own Consciences they cannot hope will be remitted, unless they

forthwith betake themselves to that Repentance which the Church, concerned for the Salvation of Souls, would put them to, in case their Sins were known. It was this fear that put so many good Christians heretofore upon bringing their secret Sins to the Church for Cure, for their being better assisted in the Work of Repentance, not having reason to think, (upon so good grounds as the safety of the Soul requires) that they could of themselves perform the Work of Repentance effectually without that help which the Ministry of God's Church might furnish. And if the same fear do not again prevail, whenever Discipline shall come in use in the Church, to make Men seek the Ministry of the Church in respect of their secret Sins; it will at least make every one concerned, voluntarily to charge himself with that Humiliation that may mortify Sin in himself, and work such a change in his heart, that the same shall for the future detest and hate Sin, as much, and more than it formerly loved it; inasmuch as otherwise a Man cannot assure himself of God's Pardon, seeing the Church will not become the Warrant of it to any but those that its Ministry hath wrought to use the necessary means of Repentance. Moreover, Discipline is useful and necessary for the Church in

In General, to keep all the Members of the Church in the way of their Duty, to preserve the Body pure, and likewise clear from Scandal; for both the Church and the Ministry thereof cannot be clear from Scandal if there be not a Discipline therein to Reprove, Rebuke, and put away, if need be, Notorious Sinners from the Communion of the Church. The Honour of the Christian Religion always suffereth, when the Professors thereof live in Unrighteousness: The Honour of the Church as a Society must therefore suffer, if being constituted a Society, to promote God's Service and the things that appertain to Godliness, it shall do nothing as a Church, to restrain the Wickedness of Men. Its Ministry also must lie under Reproach as tho' it were a Ministry of Sin, if the Church be remiss in Discipline; for how faithfully soever the Truth of Christ be Preached according to the Tenour of his Commission, that *Repentance and Remission of Sins* should be *Preached in his Name*, the former as of absolute Necessity in them that would assure their hope of the latter; yet if the Church in Ministering the Sacraments, which are means of assuring and confirming the hope of Christians as to the Remission of their Sins, shall not concern it self to discern how fit they are for them,

that pretend to them; as also to procure that disposition which maketh Men capable of forgiveness; refusing those that are visibly not qualified by Repentance, as its Ministry in this respect is by no means trustily discharged; so it giveth but too great advantage to Sinners to presume on God's Mercy upon undue grounds, and bringeth blame on the Ministry, as giving countenance and encouragement to Sin, and Sinners. So that the Honour of Religion, and of the Church of God, and the Reputation of its Ministry will all suffer through the neglect of Discipline.

And yet alas! this Discipline, though (as hath been proved) of Divine Institution, having its beginning from the express Laws of Christ and his Apostles; though observed with all strictness in the Primitive and Apostolical Church; though given in Charge as a part of the Ministry by the Apostles, and in it self most necessary, in respect of such as may have Erred from the Truth and Righteousness, to *restore them and save their Souls from Death*, even effectual to instruct them in Repentance unto Life; though also in its own nature of absolute use to preserve Religion in its Purity; is nevertheless in the present state of the Church discontinued and in a manner wholly disregarded, as though

though it never had been mentioned in that Scripture which we acknowledge for the Rule of Religion. And though the want of Discipline be an Evil that may be felt in the great Looseness and Irregularity of the Manners of Christians, yet the Remedy is not looked after. There were Abuses its true, crept into the Discipline of the Church, even such as made that Discipline not effectual to the Purposes of its Institution; but the Question is, whether those Abuses ought to be removed, and Discipline continued in the Church, or whether this be to be set aside wholly for the sake of those. I am persuaded, if the things be true, that have been premised upon grounds from Scripture, and the Practice of the Primitive Church, touching the Original Institution, and concerning also the Ends of Discipline and its Use in the Church of Christ, the Reformation of the Church consists in retaining Discipline, and by removal of Abuses, restoring it to its right use in the Church of Christ.

But before I come to press this home upon those whom it will concern, I think it expedient to take notice of the decay of Discipline in Christ's Church, and the Abuses crept into its Practice; for that will shew us what the Discipline of Christ's Church

Church would be, Abuses and Corruptions set aside, and what it should be restored to be. Now it hath been made appear already in this Discourse, that in time of the Apostles and first Ages of the Church succeeding them, there was a strict Discipline observed and practised in the Church to hold men to their Christian Profession, and put those, who contrary to the Profession they had made to God and his Church fell into Sins destructive to Christianity, under Penance; or in case they were Refractory under Censure, so that they stood deprived of the Communion of the Church, till they had given satisfaction of their being more sincere in Christianity. The Piety and Zeal of Christians abating, the strictness of Discipline abated also by degrees from age to age, till that now it is come almost to nothing. There probably might be some Remissness in it, at the time when *Montanus*, and *Tertullian* who followed him, pretended it not to be in the power of the Church to allow Penance, being the means of Reconciliation to great Sins. Not that I think *Montanus* and his followers were in the right, in disallowing the Church's Power to release any sort of Sinners from Censure when their Repentance should be manifest. But the Scruples which several Churches had

lead in this matter, (who though they did not break Communion as *Montanus* and his Followers, yet were not easily brought to rest satisfied in what other Churches did in reconciling great Sins, fearing prejudice to Religion from the grant of Reconciliation to such) seems to me an argument that there was a slackening or some abatement of Discipline at that time; a fear there plainly was of some such thing. And as men are apt when Disputes arise to run into extremes, either thinking to make their cause the better by it, or better to serve their private ends thereby; so hence *Montanus* and his Followers might take occasion to depart from the Church, and raise their own Reputation under pretence of maintaining the strict Discipline of Christ's Church, and for this purpose insist on such a rigor of Discipline as appeared specious indeed because pretended to deter from Sin; but yet different from the Discipline of Christ, which being intended to bring Sinners to Repentance, when that end is obtained, may and ought by the Church to be released. On the other hand there is some probability, that notwithstanding the Church took care (having asserted its power of readmitting the greatest Sinners to its Communion by the means of Penance) to provide that such Sinners should

should perform their Penance before they were restored thereto, for that otherwise the Church must have betrayed her Trust in allowing the hopes of God's Pardon to such as were not qualified for it according to the Gospel of Christ ; yet there might be ill men that took advantage hence (as such do not unusually even abuse the Mercy of God to wicked purposes) to allow themselves the more liberty to do Wickedly upon the account that the greatest of Sinners though excluded the Communion of the Church for their Crimes, might nevertheless be readmitted to it upon Penance : Not that these thought of performing their Penance according to the Order of the Church, any more than such think of Repenting for their Sins in the manner that God requireth (which is with true contrition of Heart) when they abuse the Divine Mercy and Sin upon presumption thereof ; but such most likely had Thoughts of doing no more Penance than pleased themselves , or standing it out with the Church should a severe Penance be put upon them ; or it may be, they valued not Communion with the Church in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which would not suffer them to be easy in their Sins, but thought they might live more at Ease and at their Liberty in the state of Peni-

Penitents, having privilege of being present at some parts of the Worship, and being allowed the Communion at their Death, or in danger of Death. Not that the Church in allowing the Communion to those that were in the state of Penitents in danger of Death, or in admitting to Penance upon Confession in these circumstances, and granting thereupon the Communion of the Church, did act therein contrary to the Discipline of Christ; for that the Church supposed such in the way of Penance and Repentance, and had reason to think God would accept the Disposition, where he gave not time to fulfill the work; and besides, the Communion was given provisionally as well to obtain the Grace of God to strengthen the Penitent in that exigent, as for the quiet of his Conscience; and withal the party stood bound to perform the Penance which was or should be enjoined, in case he Recovered: And if such survived not to perform their Penance, their Salvation remained questionable with the Church. So that the Communion was not refused to such Sinners, in regard it was possible, that the Sorrow wherewith they submitted to Penance in that case might be so sincere as to obtain pardon at God's hands; but in regard of the Doubt that remained in the
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business, there was question made of the Salvation of such as were prevented by Death from making it appear that they were truly converted. Hitherto the Church was not faulty in its Discipline, but some false Christians abused its good Orders, and found means of evading and eluding its Discipline. Such were those that *S. Cyprian* finds fault with, that put the Martyrs upon demanding their being restored to the Church before the time for their Penance was expired. The case was this, the Order of the Church always allowed an Abatement of Penance enjoined, upon appearance of extraordinary Zeal or Piety, such as might be a presumption that a true Conversion was wrought; upon this account if any shewed so great a Zeal for Christianity as to suffer or run the hazard of suffering for the Truth, this was satisfaction to the Church, so that there was an end of their Penance, and they had free admission to the Communion thereof. And the Church having the Zeal and Holiness of Martyrs and Confessors in esteem, did thereupon encline to favour in some respect such Friends of theirs as they interceded for, in the Abatement of their Penance according to the strict Rules of the Church, and granting them the Communion of the Church the sooner, because those

these Persons had a good Opinion of them as to their being sincere in their Repentance. But hence arose a very great abuse to the abatement of the strictness of Discipline in the Church and to the hazard of many Souls. For Offenders hereupon applied to the Martyrs and Confessors to demand on their behalf the Communion of the Church and the taking off their Penance; which *Cyprian* finds fault with as a Seditious practice, tending to destroy and subvert the whole Discipline of the Church; and to frustrate its whole design for the good of Souls: and therefore denies it to be in the Power of Confessors to grant such Indulgences as they pretended to, and that the Church ought to oppose them therein and not suffer it. By this means the Church kept up its Discipline as yet: However Corruption and Wickedness still growing more and more among the Professors of Christianity; those that made Profession of it, many of them became loose in their Lives, and were unwilling to hazard much for the sake of their Profession; so that in the latter Persecutions great multitudes fell away and committed Idolatry with the Gentiles, and these the Persecutions being over, were willing to return again to the Church, but not willing to submit to the Rules of its Discipline, and

and therefore made Parties and Factions in the Church to get themselves received, and by their multitude as well as other not warrantable means got to be received, and the course of Penance according to the Rules of the Church not to be insisted on. Had the Church complied with these of choice, it had been the betraying of its Trust in the Ministry; but complying and condescending as it did only to avoid a further Inconvenience or Mischief, that is to say, Schism or a breach in the Church, of all things most prejudicial to the general good of the Body, there could here-upon be no just cause for the Blame which the *Novatians* laid on the Church upon this Account; nor could it be understood that the Church warranted Forgiveness of Sins to those, whom she received after this manner, further than that Disposition of Mind, which the Parties themselves knew they returned with, might warrant it. For inasmuch as it was evident that the Church waved the Rule, by which it was wont to proceed, for to prevent the mischiefs of a Schism, in that respect the Charge of making good that Disposition, which qualified before God for the Communion of the Church, must devolve upon the Consciences of those that imposed the necessity upon the Church to wave those wholesome

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Some Rules. And upon this ground, the Answer in defence of the Church against the Novatians was, That if *any did deceive the Church with the semblance of Repentance*, God (who is not mocked and who beholdeth the Heart of Man) may judge of these things which his Servants did not well discern, and the Lord may amend the Sentence of his Servants, and punish the Iniquities of such notwithstanding their Reconciliation with the Church. Besides even at that time, unless where the Church was under a necessity aforesaid through Faction or fear of Schism, Persons were not presently admitted to Penance and the Communion, but this was done as a Writer of that time says, *With great pondering of the matter and with great deliberation, after many Sighs and shedding of Tears, after the Prayers of the whole Church.* The breach therefore was not so great upon the Discipline of the Church, but that the strictness of Discipline was in some measure restored afterwards, and Reconciliation not granted to every one that would ask it, but upon evidence of their being greatly affected with the sense of their Sins, and upon their submission to the Order of the Church.

But in some time after this, great Disorders began to break in upon the Church, the

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Civil Powers becoming Christian, a mix'd Multitude came into the Church, for the sake of Worldly Priviledges, not for the sake of Religion; and after this Scandals were soon multiply'd in that Body, which had been formerly remarkable for the Purity of their Morals, and Strictness of their Lives. And now began the Corruption of Discipline: Many Professed Christianity, either for Fashion-sake, or for hope of Advantage, but the greater part of these came not with a Resolution to live according to it, neither would they be brought to do it; by this means Offenders were too numerous and too headstrong for the Discipline of the Church to hold them in Compass; Even the Clergy were Corrupted by; and with the People, insomuch that some of them abused their Power in Christ, *Lording it over God's Heritage*, and making use of the Authority, that should have been employed against Vice and Wickedness, and for the bringing Sinners to Repentance, to Subject the Vulgar to themselves, to serve the Ends of their Ambition, and to execute sometimes, even their Malice and Revenge. Factions also were common among the People, to exempt Offenders from Censure, and from Penance, and the Lewdness of Christians encreased to that Degree, that the World
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coming into the Church, was ſaid to be the decay of Chriſtianity, though it encreaſed ſo greatly the number of Chriſtian Profeſſors. Theſe Evils, the Church for ſome time ſtrugled with, in its Councils and Synods, making, and ſetting Rules to bring both the Clergy and Laity under Diſcipline, appointing Cenfures according to Men's Crimes, as alſo the degrees and time of Penance, and Methods for the Receiving of Penitents again to the Church; ſuch, as had they been obſerved, according to the intent of thoſe faithful Paſtors that had the Intereſt and Common Good of Chriſtianity, and the Reformation of Chriſtians in view in their Eſtabliſhment of thoſe Laws; and notice alſo taken of what was Spiritual therein; would have preſerved the Diſcipline of the Church, and rendred it Effectual to its true Purpoſe of making the Lives of Chriſtians answerable to their Profeſſion, and Reforming ſuch things as were amiſs amongſt them.

But as multiplying of Laws in the Corrupt State of a Commonwealth, is thought to be a Remedy, and for that purpoſe uſually many Laws are made, yet availeth little, thoſe that ſhould Execute them being corrupted, and the Corruptions of Men ſtriving always againſt the Laws, to Evade or Elude them, and ſometimes to

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Bear them down, or Bear down those that would uphold the Power of the Laws: So it was in this Case with the Church; the Clergy being themselves corrupt, began to neglect their Function, especially this, the most difficult part of their Ministry; relaxed the Discipline of the Church, for that the Rigor of it was uneasie to themselves; complied with Great Men, who thought it hard to submit to the Publick Order; sought themselves, served their own Ambition and Passions by the Authority they had in Christ for other Purposes, which made their Ministry Reproached and Contemned: The Body of the People would not be kept within Bounds, their Vices were too Numerous and too Powerful to be controuled, some stood it out with their Pastors, others that submitted to a Penance, did it only in Formality, not minding the Spiritual intent thereof, nor concerning themselves to Sorrow after a Godly sort; such as were under Censure aimed and contended to be presently re-admitted to the Church, not minding to fit themselves for it, nor content that the Church should oblige them to a course that might make them fit by a True Repentance. Yea, such was their Lewdness, that the Discipline of the Church came amongst them into Ridicule. The
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Simplicity and Honesty of many well-meaning Christians, who for their Soul's sake, for help in the Work of Repentance and for the quiet of their Conscience, brought their Sins to the Church, and many times, by the direction of their Pastors, made Open and Publick Confession of the same in the Assemblies, desiring the Prayers of the Church to God on their behalf, was Mocked and Laughed at, and such things as should have been to the Sorrow of all, noted for Sport amongst many, and remembered to the Shame of such as were much better Christians than those that Reproached them. Howbeit, such was the Scandal hereby occasioned, that the Church hereupon was forced to alter its Method, and appoint that secret Sins should no more be Confessed Publickly. This I take to be that which was done by *Nectarius*, who was followed therein, first, by the Churches of the *East*, and afterwards by those in the *West*. For we find in the Practice of the Times following, that the Order of Publick Penance was not wholly taken away, but according to the Ancient Discipline Established by the Apostles in the Church; open Offenders were openly Censured, and pressed to make publick Confession of their Faults. Nevertheless there is reason to think that

this very Thing, the Lewdness of common Christians Mocking and Insulting at their Brethrens Simplicity and Devotion when they made open Confession of their Sins in Penance; did at length create a Prejudice even in the Minds of well-disposed Christians against the Order of the Church in this particular. And of this so much advantage was taken by ill men, who before sought by sinister means and Practices to undermining the Discipline of the Church, as now openly to stand out against it, and refuse that Confession of Sins in Publick, which hitherto had been not only thought to be the best Testimony of the Conversion of such Sinners, but also a most effectual means of humbling them, and working thereby their Conversion: This, and several sinister practices of Penitents to get themselves restored to the peace of the Church and shift their Penance, (in which such Boldness was at length used, that what the Church could not yield to with safety of Discipline, Pastors could not refuse well with safety to themselves) brought in a Practice which was the Ruin of the Order of the Church. Penitents were suffered, instead of the publick Penance, according to the Ancient course of Discipline, to do it secretly, in some private place,

place; in the presence of a few good Men, and this at the discretion of the Bishop, (or Confessor, in case of private Sins) and Absolution was given also privately. This Temper was sought; because the Generality would not submit to settled Rules; and to let their Sins pass without any Censure, was not thought as yet, a Thing that the Governors of the Church might with a safe Conscience suffer.

But in a little time the Clergy growing Corrupt with the People, to a very great degree, became themselves Corrupters of the People, accepting and allowing Commutations of Penance, taking upon themselves to favour Penitents in the injunction of their Penance, abating therein the Ancient Severities, admitting Rich Men to buy off their Penances under the decenter name of giving Alms and under pretence of contributing to Devotion, and the Honour of God, in procuring Masses to be said, wherein a secret gain was made by the Managers of the Church's Discipline: Who, willing to serve their Ambitious as well as Covetous Ends, kept up an Opinion among the People, that it was necessary for Men to seek to the Ministry of the Church for the cure of their Sins, but intending to use their Ministry to their own purposes, they laid aside the use

thereof to the purposes of Christ, that is to say, the procuring in Sinners that Disposition which might qualify them for God's Pardon and Mercy, and assumed to themselves a Power of giving Pardon in God's stead, of changing also Attrition into Contrition by their Ministry, for this thinking themselves and their Ministry should be more highly valued and esteemed; and to keep their hold of that whereof they made a Profit, the Penance was enjoined after Absolution, not as having reference to the Pardon of Sin, but as necessary in respect of Temporal Punishment which God might inflict notwithstanding that Pardon which his Ministers had granted. And being for such a purpose, 'twas pretended to be wholly in the Power of the Ministry to enjoin such satisfactions as they saw cause, yea, to grant satisfactions of others to the account of such as desired them, which at last came to be to those that would pay for them, and so Indulgences were set to open Sale. This Evil we must suppose grew by degrees, from several Changes which the Discipline of the Church suffered through the wickedness of Men. Even after many of the Clergy themselves became Corrupt, perverting and abusing the Discipline of the Church; it is to be supposed, that some

used the Remains of Discipline to the best purpose they could in the present circumstances, and we must think that the Reason and Faith of many Christians bore up, so as not to be carried away with those Corruptions, to which the Faults and Corruptions of such as Acting in the Church's Ministry abused the same, might give too great occasion. Alms-deeds, as first they were enjoined in Penance, for that they are contrary to Covetousness and that immoderate desire of Worldly Things, which is the common Temptation Men have to do Evil, as also, for that it must be a sign of Christian Charity in the Heart, when Men Dedicate to Charity those Worldly Goods and Possessions which Unrighteousness doth neither get, nor bestow well; so might be well designed, even when trusted in the hands of the Clergy to be disposed; or when first required to be trusted in their hands for Pious uses. For secret Penance there was a Reason, when the Corruption of the Age would not submit to the better Course; and thereof there might be, and was use and advantage to Christianity, when, and as long as the Pastor was Faithful, and directed to proper means for bringing the Sinner to sincere Repentance. Even the Law of secret Confession to be made once a Year to the Priest, which is now one of the

the most gross Abuses in the Church of Rome, was probably made a Law in the Church at first, upon good Reason, and for a good End its likely; because it could not be thought of all Christians, if left to themselves, that they would voluntarily charge themselves with that Humiliation and those Acts of Self-denial as are necessary to work Repentance; that therefore it was made a Law of the Church, that all should bring their Sins to the Church; and because this they would not do publicly, it was on that account thought fit they should do it to Confessors in private; and this to be done once a year, because, if left to themselves for the time, 'twas not likely to be done at all. But these things being an abatement of that Discipline which our Lord and his Apostles Instituted, and consequently an abatement to the Efficacy of his Ordinance; nor an Abuse of that Discipline, (for such Alms and Gifts for Pious Uses, as pretended, must be said to be, when accepted in Commutation for Penance, to which they might in some respect have Ministered as Means, but which they set aside, as taken in lieu thereof) and consequently, in no wise serving to the True Ends of that Discipline in the Church; did hereby give advantage to the perverse inclinations of

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len to frustrate more and more the Discipline of Christ's Church, and to shelter themselves and their wicked works from

. . . And the wickedness of Men, accordingly took the Advantage, insomuch that the Clergy being themselves Corrupt, began to have no great liking to that Discipline which would reform them; and were the more willing to release others from it, that themselves might be also free; and finding the People like well that they were so Indulged, they having laid aside before, the Ends of Christ in Discipline, thought now how to serve Ends of their own; and thus disposed, they soon found ways to serve both their Pride and Coverousness; setting up an undue Opinion of their Power in the Ministry, that their Ministry might be the more sought to, and themselves looked on as Persons having full Power from God to Pardon Sinners; and abusing the Rightful Authority thereof in Admitting Sinners to Reconciliation with the Church before their Penance; in enjoining also Penance afterwards to a different purpose than what it was intended first to serve, and with reserve of Power to themselves for making abatement thereof; by this means the Discipline of the Church was made a gain to them, but a loss to Christianity, became indeed destructive

destructive to the Christian Religion and the Souls of Sinners, instead of being as in its design it was, and in its effect ought to have been a Ministry promoting Godliness and the Salvation of Souls. For the People, who are generally in love with their Sins so far as to be well pleased when they can find a means to reconcile the hopes of Heaven with the enjoyment of them, vainly thought it to be Peace, which they obtained of the Church, not solicitous, whether their Consciences were purged from dead Works, or satisfaction made to God for the appeasing his Wrath. For this were they content to be deceived of their Money by the Church, though really to no effect, because seemingly they had assurance given them by it of the Pardon of their Sins, and of exemption from the Punishment of the same. This made the Law of Auricular Confession superstitiously complied with, it being a means that giveth some colour for a man to persuade himself that he is reconciled to God, though indeed it serve not the turn to any manner of purpose, but is a counterfeite that deludeth Souls to think that upon the Priest's Absolution, the Score of their Sins is cleared; and that they may adventure upon the same again at the hazard of another Confession and giving content to their Confessor.

Now

Now this great decay of Discipline, and vile corruption and abuse of the Remains of it, in the last Ages, did loudly call for and necessarily require a Reformation in the Church; and the Reformation that hath been with us, hath well set aside the Abusers and put down the Corruptions that prevailed to the destruction of Christianity; but hath not re-established, or could not re-establish that Apostolical Discipline to the advantage of Christianity, which should have been restored in the Church of Christ when these were taken away. It is not hard to apprehend how it came to pass that the Church of *England* hath failed in that great piece of Reformation which it aimed at in this point, the receiving of publick Penance. Besides the common obstructions which all good Prentences will ever meet with, in all communities of Christians, from the Vices and Wickedness of men that always oppose the same; there might some particular Reasons be assigned in this case, why the desire of so evident a Reformation could not take place, when Reformation in the Church was so generally sought; from the share which Human Policy had in that Change which was brought to pass in the Church, and the different aim which many following that pursued, from what those

those that had no other aim but the Reformation of the Church and the advantage of true Religion, endeavoured but could not to its full effect accomplish. But this Discourse is not so much concerned in what might occasion this failure in our Reformation, as in this that the Church of *England* hath expressed its aim at a Reformation in this Point, which it could not reach, and expressed a Godly Desire, that in future time the *Primitive Discipline* of the Church *may be restored again.*

C H A P. VII.

AND now if by the Reasons and Arguments in this Tract offered to consideration, a Proof hath been made according to what I undertook for in the beginning, that is to say, that Discipline had place in the Primitive Church by the Ordinance of Christ and his Apostles; that Christ left in his Church a Power and Authority for it, and the Apostles gave in Charge for the Churches of their own Planting to be governed by it; (which things I take to have been herein proved beyond contradiction, by Scripture interpreted according to the Sense of the first Christi-

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ans, and so agreeably to Historical Truth, that even common Sense justifieth the interpretation) It being also shewn what Discipline the Apostles Instituted in the Church; as also upon what ground and to what purpose, by what the Church immediately after them did Practise; by what was practised even throughout the whole Church; (there being no part thereof but what kept up a Discipline and agreed in the necessity of doing so.) It likewise appearing to all that will see, that which is plain to be seen in Church Writers of the several Ages, by what degrees the Decay, Abuses and Corruptions of Discipline came on; that what now remaineth of it as visibly deriveth it self from the Apostles, as the corrupt Christianity of this time can derive it self from that which they planted pure from the Fountain. These things cannot but give conviction that the Reformation of the Church consisteth in restoring of the Primitive Discipline to the use and effect it ought to have in the Church of Christ. And that if our first Reformers fell short of their Aim in this Point, it is a work remaining for the Church of the present Age to bring to pass. And that an Obligation lieth on all Ranks of Christians to do their parts towards it. As in the first place, on all that have

Vid. Ordination of Bishops and Priests.

have share in the Office of the Ministry especially, forasmuch as Discipline is part of the Charge of their Ministry. Upon whom therefore as there is a necessity laid, that they *take heed to the Ministry, which they have received in the Lord, that they fulfill it*, I might in reason well suppose there should be less need, and yet as the case stands there is the more for my pressing the Obligation; in that though it cannot be thought that they do not see, or that they do not understand it, nevertheless it is apparent that they do little towards the discharge of it, but have suffered even those Remains of Discipline, which at the Reformation of our Church were with difficulty preserved, to lye neglected in such a manner that now they are even come almost to nothing. I take Grief therefore and even Shame to my self on this account, when I remind my Superiours and Brethren, helpers as my self in the Work of the Ministry, of what was professed to be our *Minds and Wills* in this particular, when *demand was made in the Name of God and of his Church* touching the same, of what was by us undertaken and promised at our admission to this Ministration in presence of the *Congregation of God's People*, whom we took to *bear witness* how we purposed and were minded

to behave our selves in the Church of God ; and of the things given us in charge touching the same, when we received our Ministry in the Church : namely , that every Bishop in this our Church at the time he was admitted to that Administration, hath declared himself as to this Point, and promised faithfully that by the help of God he would correct and punish the Disobedient and Criminous within his Diocess, according to such Authority as he hath by God's Word and as to him shall be committed by the Orahance of this Realm : hath likewise received it in Charge, to be so Merciful that he be not too remiss, to minister Discipline ; not forgetting Mercy ; must also have fully known the intention of the Church as to what himself should do in this part of his Office, by that Prayer which it maketh to Almighty God , beseeching that he would give Grace to all Bishops, the Pastors of his Church, that they may diligently preach his Word and duly administer the Godly Discipline thereof ; as also by what was asked of God by the Church on behalf of himself in particular, that he would grant his Servant Grace to use the Authority given him, not to Destruction but to Salvation. That also every one admitted to the Order and Ministry of Priesthood within this Church hath undertaken and promised

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that

that he will *by the help of the Lord*, give faithful diligence always so to Minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the *Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded*, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same according to the Commandments of God ; as also that the *Lord being his helper* he will be ready with all faithful Diligence *to use both publick and private Monitions and Exhortations* as need shall require and occasion shall be given : And that as Power hath been committed to him by the imposition of hands for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, that Power which Christ gave for Discipline in his Church, *of retaining and remitting Sins* ; so he hath received a Charge with it to be a *faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of his holy Sacraments* ; which *faithful dispensation of the Sacraments* shall ever imply the discharge of that great Trust which God hath committed to them, to whom he hath given the Power of Ministering them, for the Ministration of the same according to the Terms of the Gospel, that none be allowed the assurance of their hopes as to God's Promises by these, but such as may reasonably be thought really and indeed qualified for those Promises which the Gospel tendreth. These things if we reflect on, and consider with our
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selves the nature and end of our Ministry towards the Children of God, towards the Church of Christ; we cannot want conviction that we ought, and in that respect should not methinks want Persuasion, never to cease our Labour and Diligence, until we have done all that lieth in us to restore and bring to effect the Discipline of Christ's Church. Otherwise I cannot see how it is possible we should effectually and to the purpose intended by Christ discharge the great Trust of our Ministry; as I see not to what purpose we pretend our selves to be Ministers of Christ and of the Gospel, in case we acknowledge not a Charge and Trust upon us to Minister the Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded. I do not suppose any Bishop of the Church of *England* will pretend himself exonerated from the Charge laid upon him by Christ and his Church, or from his own engagement thereupon, *to correct and punish the Criminals according to such Authority as he hath by God's Word*, upon the account that 'tis required of him to do this according to *such Authority as shall be committed to him by the Ordinance of this Realm*: Nor that any one called to the Office of a Priest in this Church will pretend to hold himself excused from *Ministering the Discipline of Christ*.

as the Lord hath commanded, for that he is also required to do this, as this Church and Realm hath received the same according to the Commandments of God : Which can never be looked on as any Limitation upon the Powers which the Church hath received from Christ, but only as directing the exercise thereof according to Form and Ceremony and Circumstances. Or if any should go about to make use of this pretence, it will be to little purpose ; for that the Discipline of Christ hath been received, in some measure at least, by this Church and Realm, tho' not executed to effect for the benefit of God's Church and Interest of Christianity, which is the fault that cannot be accounted for. Moreover both this Church and Realm have expressly taken notice of a failure in the designed Reformation in this Point, so that it cannot be the design of the Laws or Ordinances of either to hinder or abridge the Discipline of Christ from being executed as the Lord hath commanded. And besides, all such as have received Orders in this Church look upon themselves, 'tis to be hoped, as deputed to their Ministry by Jesus Christ, though to be directed in those Functions which their Order importeth, by the Laws and Ordinances of this Church and Realm : And believe the effect of what they

they do in all parts of their Office to be wrought *by the Power of Christ*, though their Office be exercised with effect *outwardly* by means of the *Laws of this Church and Realm*; these assisting towards the doing the Work, but the Power of Christ producing the Spiritual end and purpose of Converting the Soul. Consequently the Right, and Charge, and Trust appertaining to their respective Offices must be supposed to rest upon their Ministries and to lye upon them as from Christ, that are incharged with the oversight and government of God's Church according to the Ordinance of Christ; so that by them such Ministries must be executed, were the Commonwealth not Christian; and therefore even as it is Christian, much more they should be exercised according to the Commandment of God and Christ: Insomuch that if our Church and Realm which pretend to have received the Discipline of Christ, according to the Commandment of God, and truly hath so done so far as the same hath been received; should indeed not have so done, or should have received it to different purposes, or should endeavour to set it aside after it hath been received; it will lye upon them who are Ministers of Christ and his Church, not of the State or Commonwealth,

to acknowledge the Discipline of Christ to Christian Purposes, and use it to such effect and not recede from their Power in Christ: Much more to endeavour to make that Discipline which the Ordinances of the Church and Realm favour, effectual to the Ends of Christ and Interest of Christianity; and likewise to let it be seen by the effect of that Discipline which is, how much greater benefit it would be to Christian Religion to have it fully received according as by the Apostles of Christ it was established, and in the Primitive times practised in the Church of God; as well as to insist upon the Right of the Church to be allowed in the full Powers of its Ministry, being such as Christ left with his Church, and which are absolutely necessary (which Christ our Lord thought so or else he had not given them) for the good Government of his Church. This therefore I shall leave with the Conscience of all that are admitted to the Ministry in the Church, after I have said this one word, that this is an Office of the Ministry expressly given in Charge by the Holy Scriptures, and is in its nature as effectual through the Power of Christ to saving Purposes as any other Charge of our Ministry whatsoever; even the Dispensation of the Sacraments is not a more necessary part

part of the Ministry, yea this is implied in the faithful Dispensation of these. For not to speak of what is by the Corruption of men, but what ought to be by the appointment of God, it is a thing undeniable, That the Right of Communicating with the Church in the Holy Sacrament, is not to be allowed any by the Ministry of the Church, but upon such Terms and according to such Rules, that a Man being qualified according to them, may be also qualified for those Promises which the Gospel tendreth; which the Discipline of the Church, *i. e.* they that have the Ministry of its Discipline are to see to and bring to pass.

These things also make it the Common Concern of all Christians to have the Discipline of Christ Received and Established in the Church for the good of Souls. For so long as the Church is without Discipline, the Members thereof must be without the benefit thereof to their Souls; and how to supply that want to themselves, is probably not known to the greatest part; and 'tis questionable as to more, whether they will be so true to the Interest of their Souls, as to supply of their own accord, that which is lacking in the Church's Ministry. Now that Defect which is in the Ministry in this Case, must remain, unless

the Members of the Church consent to allow the Ministry in its full Powers, and submit to the Authority thereof; for that our Lord Christ hath not indued the Ministers of his Kingdom with any outward or Temporal Power to constrain Obedience, neither in this, nor any other Case. The Laws of Kingdoms and Commonwealths may indeed something enforce the Execution and outward Effect of this Ministry; but the inward End is wrought by the Spiritual Power which the Conscience of a Christian acknowledgeth. Hence all Christians become concerned to receive, and acknowledge the Spiritual Institutions of the Gospel and the Power of the same to the purposes of God and Christ; Having reason to believe, that Christ will give them Power and Efficacy to attain their Ends when Administred in his Name, and according to his Will, and that because they are *His*; (if so be they are received as his Institutions by them that are obliged so to receive them, and to be subject unto them); and having cause to receive them as such, their Institution appearing in the Scriptures, together with Powers given for bringing them to Effect, and Rules prescribed therein for making them most serviceable to Christian Ends. This is the thing that maketh it to lie upon all Christians

Christians to receive the Word of God Preached, *not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of God*, which will effectually work in them when they believe: And this accordingly maketh it necessary that the Discipline of the Church be acknowledged to be the Discipline of Christ; and that the Power of Christ be believed to render it effectual to saving purposes towards them, that out of Conscience submit thereto.

But in as much as Men are Christians now more upon Motives of Intrest than Conscience, as in that respect it is to be feared they may not be willing to submit themselves to the Discipline of Christ or his Church, their Love they have to their Sins having made them Resolute and Headstrong, Impatient of Reproof, Correction, or Censure in their Unchristian way of living; so that tho' it might be hoped of the better part, they would be inclinable out of Conscience, to submit to the Church in this its Ministry: nevertheless it cannot be thought of the greater part, that they will do it of their voluntary Will: This maketh it necessary that the State, being Christian, should lend its Assistance to the Ministry of the Church, to Compass and Effect the Establishment of the Primitive Discipline. For, how is the
State

State Christian, but as it maintaineth the Ministers of Christ's Church in doing their Office, and enforceth the effect of their Ministry upon those that would not otherwise be Subject, or yield Obedience to them? It must be allowed, I grant, to every State, to judge of that wherein the Church desireth Assistance from it, whether it be part of that Christianity which it hath undertaken to maintain, as also, what Course is to be taken therein agreeable to the renour of Scripture, if possible, in the first place, and yet, such as may agree also with the Necessities of the Kingdom in which the Church findeth its Protection. For even all Private Christians are allowed the Judgment of particular Discretion to discharge unto God, even in Matters of Religion, the account of what themselves do: therefore is this Judgment rather to be allowed to Persons in Publick Authority, to consider in what they are to lend, or refuse their Assistance to the Ministers of the Church in their Office, under the account they are to give to God as they are Christians, and as they are Sovereign Powers; in the latter of which Capacities they must be allowed to have Consideration of the Necessities of the Kingdom under their Civil Government. Not that they may, for what by them shall be judged the
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the necessities of the Kingdom, put down,
obstruct the Church in any part of the
Ministry which she hath Right to Execute
with Powers from Christ, which must al-
ways be left to their full Effect upon the
Consciences of Men, or else the State Ty-
rannizeth over, and Persecuteth the
Church; but that they may refuse to en-
force the Ministry of the Church with
other External Power, and Force than the
Necessities of the State will allow; yet
this still under the account they must give
to God for the Protection of Christiani-
ty, which as Christians they are obliged
to, in the best manner that they can judge
their Secular Power may be employed
for that purpose. Having said this, it is
not my design, any one may be sure, to
insist, that the Sovereign Power, being
Christian, is under an absolute Obligation
to enforce the Censures of the Church with
Temporal Coercions and Penalties. For I
take it to be but conjecture at most, which
hath been urged in this Case by some,
That God impowred the Apostles to en-
force their Censures with Bodily Punish-
ments upon Offenders, for that the Church
was destitute of the Protection of Secular
Powers to constrain by outward Force,
submission to its Authority; and that a-
gainst the time that this extraordinary
Power

Power should cease, ~~he~~ provided the Protection of Secular Powers for the Maintenance of Christianity; that this therefore should oblige these Powers to enforce the determination and Censures of the Church in all Cases with Temporal Penalties, to make the same be always received, and submitted to. For though it be true, that the Apostles had such an extraordinary Power from God, in respect of which, the Censure, which put Offenders out of the Church is called a delivering to Satan, because, by some Plague on the Body, it appeared that they came within his Power so soon as put out of the Church; yet there appeareth another reason for this, namely, that it might be a confirmation of God's Power in, and with the Ministry of his Church, which ceased when God saw fit, and that sufficient Confirmation had been given of the Presence and Power of God with his Church and with the Ministry thereof: And besides, it is pretended without Proof, that this extraordinary Effect followed the Censures of the Church all the time that the Church wanted the Assistance of the Civil Magistrate; and if it were true, it would not be sufficient to infer the Consequence, that this should oblige Secular Powers to confirm the Censures of the Church

March always against Stubborn Sinners
th standing Penalties. Nevertheless, if
e Civil Power, which being Christian,
ght to Cherish the Church in its Bo-
m, will Protect the Church in its Mini-
y; it must in this Case not abridge the
Church's Ministry, nor lay any Restraint
on her Powers, but allow the Ministers
acreeof according to their Office to Go-
ern the Church by the Discipline of
Christ. It must so far Protect and Main-
ain the Church in this its Ministry, as to
estrain any that may go about to disturb
he Peace of the Church in respect of her
Censures. It ought to re-estate the Church
and its Synods in their full Right, if they
have been outed of such Right, or other-
wise to own and acknowledge the Right
of the Church, to prescribe Rules, and
make necessary Laws for restoring the Pub-
lick Discipline of Penance in the Church,
being an Ordinance of our Lord and his
Apostles, Abolished indeed by Injury of
Time, and Corruption in the Manners and
Principles of Christians, but necessary to
be restored in respect of the Obligation
upon the Church to Execute the Ministry
of Christ in all its parts, as well as in re-
spect of the Evils and Mischief to Chri-
stianity that have been found to proceed
from the want thereof. It ought to pro-
cure,

cure, that Men set a due esteem upon the Communion of the Church, and that they fear the Sentence of Excommunication, if not for Temporal Penalties which Civil Laws may make consequent thereon; however at least, by so far Privileging those that hold and seek Communion with the Church, as that no Man may find his Interest in standing out against the Church, and despising her Censures. I take it for granted, that if a State will Protect the Church, it cannot do less than this; it must allow it the Exercise of its Ministry, or it doth not allow it to be a Church; and as it cannot be said to allow its Ministry unless the whole be allowed, so it can never be supposed to be in the Power of a State to lay a Restraint upon any part thereof, but for the same Reason that this shall be judged Lawful, it shall be Lawful for a State to set aside the whole Ordinance of our Lord and his Apostles. It must preserve and keep the Church from Violence and Force, whilst it proceedeth according to its own Rules; or otherwise, the Church, as a Church hath not Protection. It must not wrest any Powers from the Church, nor take them to it self, for that destroyeth the Society of the Church, that this is no more a Society, being without the necessary Powers of a Society, enabling

enabling it to act for the ends and purposes of its Constitution. The State must likewise own and acknowledge the Right of the Church to prescribe and make Rules that shall have the Authority of Laws within the Church, for bringing to Effect the Ministry and Ordinances of our Lord and his Apostles ; otherwise the State taketh upon it to set aside, or make void the Trust and Power which Christ hath left and committed to his Church. And for that I take it, there are but Two Reasons, in respect of which the Church can be said to be Protected by the State, that is to say ; in respect either of Privileges to such as hold Communion with the Church, or Penalties on such as do not ; I, (who have not insisted that Secular Powers are bound to Protect the Church by inflicting Penalties upon all those that are not of it, but that they may act therein as to themselves shall seem meet, having regard to the Constitution and Necessities of their State, and to another thing not as yet mentioned, namely, that there can be no constraint to true Christianity by Temporal Punishment, that therefore it is by no means reasonable in this Case to make use of the utmost Penalties) must yet insist, that where the Church hath Protection, there be such Privileges to those that

that hold Communion with it, as that Men following the Reason of Privilege and of Christianity together, may set an esteem upon the Communion of the Church, and fearing the loss of Temporal Privileges upon being excluded from the Communion of the Church, may be induced to submit to the Church, and what course of Penance that may prescribe to prevent the loss of their Souls. It will be said (for it is said already as to what the Civil Power hath with us done for the Protection and Advancement of Christianity, that this may make Hypocrites, but not True Christians) this may cause some Persons to hold Communion with the Church, and to submit to Terms for sake of Privileges which Communion with the Church affordeth, more than for the sake of Christianity, or any inward esteem that they have of the Church's Communion, and the Spiritual Advantages that affordeth. And truly, 'tis not unlikely that Hypocritical Profession may many times follow that which Secular Powers do at any time with purpose of advancing Christianity, or giving Countenance or Authority to the Church of Christ: But 'tis more than probable also, that the Assistance which the State may give to the Church may be to good purpose, as Men being kept by
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Laws of their Country to hold Communion with the Church, and for that to avoid such Scandalous Practices as must otherwise exclude them that Communion, to their-Prejudice, may be won in time by seeing the Effect of Christianity and the Ministry thereof, to the Reformation of Mens Lives among whom they live, to allow the same to have effect also upon their own Hearts and Lives. It is upon this latter probability that Christian States have always Acted, when they have given Assistance to Religion, or the Church; and the probability on this side will ever be of weight, 'tis to be hoped, with Christian Powers, to Act with a good meaning and purpose for the Interest of Christianity under the Account they are to give to God, for employing the Authority he has given them in the World, to his Service and Honour; so as the possibility on the other side, that the Wickedness of Men may defeat their good purpose, and the best measures they can take shall not however hinder them from doing what on their part may be done, and what it is their Duty to do, as they profess Christianity, and the Maintainance of God's Church.

I may not however after all this, pretend to say, what the Supreme Power of this Kingdom ought to do for the Establish-

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ment of the Church's Discipline. What it may do, and what it is reasonable it should, are things to be considered by Superiours in the Church, when these shall take into Consideration how the Discipline of Christ's Church may be Restored, and may then be fit to be represented to the Authority of the Kingdom. Only indeed, if the Church be under such Restraint of Temporal Laws, that her Synods cannot enter into Consultation; how to bring the Ordinances of Christ and his Apostles into Effect; the State will be Answerable to God for the Obstruction to the Ordinance and Ministry of Christ, if such Restraint be not taken off; that the Ecclesiastical Synods of this Church may be left free to Consult and Act for the Maintenance of our Common Christianity, and of the Church that Ministreth thereto, and particularly in this very Case, how by wholesom Discipline to restrain those Vices and Enormities, which at present Deface our Church, and have Sullied all her Glory, have Corrupted Religion, and Debauched Men's Lives and Principles to a great degree. When *Men's Sins are thus open before-hand, going before to Judgment,* openly calling for the Censures and Judgment of the Church, to put a Restraint upon such Practices, there ought to be the strictest

strictest Discipline, and in such Circumstances our Ecclesiastical Synod ought to call to mind the Work of the first Councils and Synods in the Church, to give Effect to that Discipline which Christ left inherent in his Church for the Support and Maintenance of Christianity, so as to act after their Example. And in short, such is the necessity of a Reformation, that those that bear the Power of the Church can never be Excusable in a farther neglect of their Duty in this Case; and the Authority of the Kingdom will be also chargeable with much of the Guilt, if pretending to act with Authority in the Church after the Example of the Pious Kings of God's People, who employed their Authority to reduce the Law into Practice, it oblige not those who have the Power of the Church trusted with them, to give Effect to the Ordinance of our Lord and his Apostles in this particular; and concur not with them thereunto.

C H A P. VIII.

I Must not pass over in this place the consideration of several Pretences that are commonly offered in excuse for our

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having

having laid aside the Discipline of Christ's Church, or at least, for our not endeavouring to retrieve and restore it.

Now against the Restoring of Discipline, some say, that it is sufficient for the Edification of the Church, that the Gospel should be *Preached in it*, since that is the Ordinary means which God has appointed to procure the Conversion and the Salvation of Men. If this Pretence had any thing of Reason in it, I might nevertheless argue for the necessity of Discipline in the present Circumstances of the Church, upon the account that the Ordinance of Preaching is not now of that Efficacy as it was in the times of the Apostles, that then there were Extraordinary Graces and Powers accompanied the Preaching of the Word, that gave it an influence and efficacy greatly beyond any Effects thereof that are at present seen, or may be now expected. So that there is a great mistake in the commonly received Opinion of the efficacy of the *Word Preached*. But this I need not insist on; for, allowing to the Ordinance of Preaching as great efficacy now as it had in the first beginnings of the Gospel, nevertheless it is but one among other means of God's appointment for to bring to pass the Conversion and Salvation of Men, there
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are besides this, the Sacraments and Discipline prescribed in, and by the Gospel of Christ. Now all the Ordinances being instituted by the same Power, it is even most necessary for the Reputation of the Wise Contrivance of them, that no one Ordinance should supersede the use of the other, but in respect of the Divine Institution there is an Obligation to keep up the respect and use of every Ordinance, it not being to be supposed that the Divine Wisdom would have appointed any but what must be of use and benefit, which benefit will be lost, if there be not an use of the Ordinance. This is the case, as to *Preaching the Word*, it was, and is, an effectual means for the Conversion of Men to Christianity; and a Grace goeth with it for that purpose; but after Men are wrought to Believe, and Profess Christianity, they are concerned to live suitably to that Profession: Now though by the present use of Preaching Men may be Convinced of the necessity of a Holy Life, yea, suppose them brought to the greatest and most serious sense of this Necessity; yet they stand in need of farther Grace, to enable them to practise Holiness; this makes the use of the Sacraments necessary, from which that assistance may be expected; and must it not reasonably be

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thought

thought that they stand in need also of that care which the Church taketh to keep them to the strict performance of their Christian Duty, when as our Lord Christ hath appointed Government and a Discipline in his Church for that purpose, having set, and appointed the Ministers of his Church to watch over his Flock that they go not astray? Can any Man assure himself that his own heart shall at no time deceive him, so as that he may need and receive benefit in the concerns of his Soul, from the watch and care which Christ hath required the Faithful Pastors of his Church to keep and take, in reference to the Souls committed to their Charge? 'Tis certain the Pastors of Christ's Church cannot but know the chief part of their Function to be the Conduct and Government of the Church, and that though now-a-days the whole Ministry seems placed in the business of Sermons; there is another Trust upon them for the Conduct and Government of the Church, and this they know to be a Charge of the greatest moment; therefore why they should suppose they are not to account to God for this as well as any other Office of their Ministry I cannot see. Whoever looks into what *S. Paul* hath writ, concerning the Duties of the Ministry, and shall examine

amine what he says of that Charge and of the Qualifications of those who are to be admitted into it, will find that he insists upon the Government of the Church as the Principal Charge of the Ministry; as hath been shewn already out of the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*. It must be therefore said, that those who think Preaching can answer all the occasions of the Church, are wiser than Christ and his Apostles; but those Pastors, who can be content that the Discipline of Christ's Church be laid aside to please the Humour of those who are content to hear what Ecclesiasticks have to say for the Christian Religion, but resolved to live as please themselves; will be chargeable before God for that Corruption of the People, which is the consequence of the Loss of the Church's Discipline, and for betraying the greatest Trust of their Ministry so far as they have consented to lay this Discipline aside.

But others perhaps will say, that Discipline is not essential to Religion; it is a matter of Order only, and therefore as it cannot be of very great Moment, so there may be Liberty to use or not use it, as the Church shall see occasion. To this I answer: That it is true there are in Christianity, Things immediately necessary

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to the Salvation of Particular Christians, relating to Faith or good Manners ; and there are other Things necessary to the publick Order and Government of the Church, that by it Christians may be edified in all matters of the first kind. The Things of the first kind are indeed of the greatest Moment as immediately concerning the Salvation of Christians, yet those of the latter kind are of Importance and Necessity in the Church, as the Church is constituted a Society and the Ministry thereof appointed for the Assisting and Edifying Christians in the things of their Salvation. It is not pretended, that there is not Salvation to be had for Christians without Discipline, nor that there are not means of Salvation in a Church where Discipline is not ; for some may have that probity of Heart as may resolve them to become good Christians of themselves, whether the Church take any care of them or not ; and more may be wrought by the word Preached to a serious Sense of the necessity of a Holy Life ; and though left to themselves to look to the qualifying of themselves for the Sacraments of Christ's Church, whereby they receive the Divine Grace to enable them to live that Life, may out of a true concern for their Souls take a faithful care to come to the Sacraments

ments so Qualified as God requires, and may by that means obtain Grace and work out their Salvation. But inasmuch as more might be brought still to live the Life of Christians were the full Ministry of the Church imployed for this purpose, and more Benefit would accrue to the greater part of Christians by the Church's looking after, and seeing them qualified duely for the Sacraments according to what is required in the Gospel for Benefit to be had thereby; in this respect it must be said that there are not all the means of Salvation in a Church, where Discipline is not; and that no Church can be at Liberty to use or not use this which is a Necessary part of its Ministry as being of Christ's Institution, and is one of those means of Salvation which the Church is intrusted to furnish and supply to Christians, who are to be kept and conducted by the Ministry thereof in the way to Salvation. It is not to be pretended that this is a weak means and therefore the less to be regarded. For as to the Spiritual Institutions of the Gospel, How are any capable of judging, which are Weaker which Stronger, when as they come all to effect by the Invisible Power of God? For this reason they are to be thought always sufficient for the accomplishment of the Ends, where-

whereunto they are designed, as they have a Powerful though secret Influence on the Consciences of men : being his Institutions who is Lord of their Consciences, and who knoweth how to give them Power and Efficacy to attain their Ends, and will do it because they are His Ordinances. And therefore the Discipline of Christ's Church being a Spiritual Ordinance, that conducteth and keepeth within the bounds of Christian Religion the Professors thereof; by a constraining Force indeed, but this not such as affecteth either Men's Bodies or their Estates, but such as is a Spiritual Force that is efficacious and operating upon the Heart and Consciences of Men, is not to be thought a weak means or slight part of the Ministry of God's Church, so as on that account to be slighted by those that are to bring the Ministry of the Church to effect for the saving of Souls. But on the contrary 'tis rather to be considered, by them that have the Trust of this Ministry, that *St. Paul* hath said concerning it, that the *Weapons thereof are not carnal but mighty through God*, and that the use of his *Power which the Lord hath given him* in this case would be a *proof of Christ's being with him*, who was not weak but mighty. That therefore this Ministry of the Church, were it, as in former

2 Cor. 10.
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mer days, in some measure acted rightly and zealously towards the known ends of it, such as by all it must be acknowledged useful and necessary to, if there be a force and efficacy in it : the same will still have its Effect upon all truly conscientious as in the Primitive Church ; and this might make more to be conscientious, and God by the Power of his Spirit invisibly assisting (as there is reason to believe he is pleased to assist all his own Ordinances when his Church faithfully Administred the same according to His Mind and Will, and for the ends of his Glory, or ends by Him appointed) might be a means to restore the now well-nigh lost Government of the Church and Practice of Religion.

But 'tis likely that it will be said, That the Zeal of the Primitive Christians is extinct, that Men are now very Corrupt and not to be brought to a submission to the Discipline of the Church, yea the generality are of a Temper that will make that Discipline not liked even by good Men. But this very thing that Men are Corrupt is an argument for the necessity of Discipline. This Reason maketh Discipline more necessary now than it was in the first Ages of the Church, when the Christian Church was not so Corrupt, when Persecution

cution kept Corruption out of the Church: When the Church is in Peace Vices and Scandals multiply, and then is good Discipline most necessary. It must be owned indeed, that as the state of Diseased Bodies sometimes will not admit of the proper Remedies, so the Corruption of Christians is grown to that height as that it will hardly be brought to admit the proper method of Cure. But as the skilful Physician does not give over the Disease for desperate in every weak Constitution, but seeks to help the Infirmities of a weak Body, that it may be able to bear the application of proper Remedies: So should every Physician of Souls encounter the Prejudices, which (in our corrupt State and lewd Age, not bearing strict restraint or controul) men may have against the Discipline of Christ's Church; and for this purpose carefully instruct the People concerning the necessity of Discipline, preparing them as they may for it, shewing their Prejudices against it to be unreasonable, arising chiefly from Lusts, that if suffered to prevail, will destroy their Souls; and convincing them that the Discipline of Christ's Church is the wholesome necessary Physick to cure the great Corruption of the present time. Endeavours being used to this purpose, there is good ground to be-

believe a possibility of success; for if it was a thing impossible to bring men under the Discipline of Christ, God would never have appointed it in his Church. The wickedness of Men at all times obstructeth the means of God's appointment for bringing men off from such Wickedness, and the greater this groweth the more is the obstruction at all times; if therefore Vice and Licentiousness be strong and prevalent, as now, the Church and her Ministers that are concerned to oppose and give stop to its progress, are in that respect the more concerned not to recede from, or part with any Part or Powers of their Ministry, but rather to make full Proof thereof to the utmost effect possible in the case; only taking heed to this, the management of the Powers of their Ministry with necessary Prudence, which may render the exercise of the same effectual, according to what Circumstances the Church may be in, or what Temper those particular men may be of with whom they have to do, or what may be the Discipline of the generality of Christians: All which may deserve regard in the management of the Powers of our Ministry; though there ought not regard to be had to any or all of them for the laying aside any Part of that Ministry by which the Church
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of Christ is to be governed according to his appointment. It must be owned, 'tis true, as to the present Temper of the generality of Christians; it is such, as probably would render the Discipline of Christ's Church uneasy to the most conscientious Christians, if they were to pass through it; in respect of the Shame and Ignominy which the Lewdness of vulgar Christians might be apt to expose those to, who out of Christian Simplicity, and true Humility, and inward Sorrow of Heart for their Sins might be content to receive Penance from the Church. This is an Evil, but such as may be removed by shewing men the evil and mischief of such Lewdness as shall work and insult over, not only the failings and infirmities of their Christian Brethren but also their Devotion and Humility; their Sorrow and Contrition of Heart, and even turn the solemn Ordinance of Christ into Ridicule. It must be shewn that St. Paul hath given a Rule to all Christians in this case, that if

a man be overtaken in a fault, those which are Spiritual, should restore such a one in the Spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted, and that he requireth of Christians to bear one anothers burthens and so fulfil the Law of Christ: that is to say, that in cases of this nature, men should

Gal. 6. 1, *a man be overtaken in a fault, those which*
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are Spiritual, should restore such a one in the Spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted, and that he requireth of Christians to bear one anothers burthens and so fulfil the Law of Christ: that is to say, that in cases of this nature, men should

should at all times consider, how possible it is, that they themselves may fall into the like Sin in time of Temptation, and in that regard should by no means insult over their Brethren overtaken in a Fault, but rather pity them and be concerned for them, having sorrow on their behalf, seeking to recover them out of the snare of the wicked one; and praying for them, that it would please God to give them Repentance unto Life. Men must be put in mind of the Primitive Christians who Sympathised with their Brethren in such a manner, that the whole Assembly did Mourn and Lament when the Censures of the Church past on Sinners, or when such were admitted to Penance; bewailing in the former case the circumstances and sad state of the Sinner, and in the latter case Solicitous for their Reconcilement with God. It must be shewn that Christian Charity *rejoyceth not in iniquity, but rejoyceth in the Truth*, i. e. it truly rejoyceth to see men discharge their Christian Duty and live in all manner of *sincerity*; but it rejoyceth not, it is sad and extremly grieved at all Wickedness, it maketh a Man truly grieve and mourn at any Sin committed by any other, much more at the miscarriages of a Christian Brother; for whom as a Christian hath a more near concern, so he ought

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to have the greater compassion, when *he* seeth him Offend to the hazard of his Soul, and to the dishonour and reproach of the Christian Name and Profession. 'Tis to be supposed that a careful representation of these things might bring the generality of Christians to such a Temper of Charity and Meekness and Purity, as that they neither would triumph nor insult over the failures and infirmities of their *Christian Brethren* ; nor make sport with their Penitence and Devotion ; nor take Pleasure to themselves and mock at such Wickednesses as may come under Publick Reproof or Censure ; which is a thing that betrays a secret Love to Wickedness in those that are so vile as to make a sport thereof, and giveth occasion to good men of dislike to the Discipline of the Church, when as their Submission to it exposeth them to contempt and shame with dissolute Christians. Nevertheless if this Lewdness may not be presently nor altogether taken away and removed, those Christians who may stand in need of being instructed by the Church to Repentance, must be informed and persuaded that they consult very ill for themselves, if they are more mindful of their Shame than of their Salvation ; that being conscious to themselves of their Sins, they have reason to
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take Shame to themselves in that respect; and though indeed it no way becomes their Fellow Christians to make them a contempt and scorn, yet especially as themselves have deserved worse at the hands of God, that shame which in respect of themselves and their Sins is just, though no other than unreasonable and sinful folly in those that reproach them with it, should not hinder them from submitting to that course of Penance prescribed by the Church's Discipline as necessary to prevent the future Punishment of their Sins and save their Souls. It is to be considered moreover by them that are to bring the Discipline of the Church to effect, that this Lewdness began to spring early in the Church: There were in *Origen's* time those that did upbraid, mock and deride their Christian Brethren upon the account of things which were confessed in Penance. *Tertullian* indeed argues that no good Christian could be guilty of such wicked Folly; and he said right, for it is a contradiction to the Law of Christian Charity and the Spirit of Humility and Meekness; but yet even in his time there were some Professors of Christianity that committed this Folly; and he found this mischief from it, that many shunned the work of Penance upon it, being more mindful of their
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Shame, as he says, *than of their Salvation*. But he was far from allowing this to be an Excuse for those that drew back from the Discipline of the Church on this account, or that the Church might wave its Discipline for this reason. It is true, that seems to have given occasion for the Church's substituting afterwards Private Confession instead of Publick; but this at first was only of secret Faults voluntarily Confessed, by that means to draw more to seek of themselves the assistance of the Church in their Repentance for their Secret Sins, when these were not to be published to the Ears of the People, but only to be laid open to the Penitentiary that was appointed to take their Confession and instruct them in Repentance. Still the Discipline of the Church brought open Sins to Publick Confession; and from the time that first this came to be abated, thence may be dated the Decay and Abuse of Discipline. To pretend therefore the dissolute Behaviour of Christians to be a Reason that will justify the not restoring the Discipline of the Church, is but in a manner the same thing as to say, There is no Blame nor Fault in this that it hath been suffered to Decay and fall to Nothing. Which yet I do not suppose any Christian will plainly say or avouch.

It

It will be said probably, that the want of Discipline in the Church is supplied by the Authority of the Civil Magistrate, as in all places where the Civil Power is Christian, and the Authority thereof employed to suppress Vice and Licentiousness. It must be acknowledged indeed, that the Power of the Civil Magistrate is of God's Appointment, to be a Terror to them that do Evil, and that Civil Punishments are of great use, to restrain and suppress Vice and Wickedness at all times. But nevertheless, this cannot be a Reason for the Discipline of the Church to be laid aside, which is of Christ's Institution. The one is of use, but the other is much more useful to the effect of Reformation. The Magistrates Power reacheth only to the outward Behaviour, but the Discipline of the Church hath Effect on the Heart and Conscience; neither the one nor the other, its true, can take hold of any but open and known Sins, but the Operation of the latter extendeth to work the heart to Contrition for the same, and to an inward Resolution of Amendment, whereas the Civil Power restraineth only the outward Act. It must be owned indeed farther, that even the Discipline of the Church, (considering the present disposition of Men in this Corrupt State

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State of Christianity) is of more Force when it is supported by the Authority of Civil Powers. Nevertheless, the Civil Authority must not for this supersede the use of Ecclesiastical Discipline, nor be thought sufficient to Reclaim Sinners, and ^{to} reform the Church of Christ.

The Discipline of the Church and that of the Magistrate are distinct Things; the one has its effect upon the Conscience by the Power of Christ, though it may come to some effect outwardly also by the help of that other, whose Power is from outward Force and Punishment. Both these therefore have their use, and should accordingly be employed to effect a Reformation. I allow therefore the Zeal of many that have made an Attempt lately in this Kingdom towards a Reformation of Manners, by putting in Execution the Penal Laws against Wickedness and Prophaness, to be good and commendable; but the Corruption and Lewdness of the Age requires a more effectual Remedy, that is to say, the Restoring of the Church Discipline. There hath been lately Publish'd

*Account of
the Societies
for Reformation,
&c.*

an Account of several Societies formed in this Kingdom to Effect a Reformation of Manners, by putting in Execution the Laws of the Realm against Prophaness and Debauchery. The Design seems to be very good,

good, but the Method wrong, for that the forming of Societies for Reformation of Manners out of those that are already Members of a Christian Church, seems to carry with it a Reproach to the Society of the Church, Constituted it self for that purpose. And the Argument of that Author, That *Christians of all Ranks* are obliged in Conscience to engage in Societies for the purpose of having the Laws of the Kingdom put in Execution against Profaneness, as the most proper means to compass a National Reformation, and most likely to prove for that end effectual, doth seem to imply, either that the Church whereof they are Members is not a Society for such purpose, or that this Society hath not proper Means and Power of its own to bring it to pass. For the Church being a Society Constituted for the purpose of our being kept therein to live Christian and Holy Lives, and all Christians bound to become Members of the Church, and subject to those that Govern in it; the forming of another Society within the Church seemingly reflecteth on the rest of our Christian Brethren, and on the Church it self whereof all are Members. And if the Church be a Society with Powers from Christ to oblige its Members to live Christianly, it must be the first Concern of Christi-

ans to allow those Powers their Force, and bring to effect for this purpose the Discipline of the Church. Not but that the Authority of the Kingdom hath done well in making Laws for punishing Wickedness, and there lieth also an Obligation according to the Stations and Offices Men may be in, and bear within the Kingdom, to put these Laws in Execution, and their doing it is Service to God as well as to their Country. Yet the Obligation lying upon all as Christians, and upon the Clergy especially, that bear the Power of the Church, is of another nature, that is to say, it lieth upon all as Christians to restore one another in the way of Charity, to seek the Recovery of a Brother from the Snare of the Devil, and the saving of his Soul by the Methods that Christianity directeth, i. e. fraternal Correption, Admonition, Exhortation, Reproof, &c. and upon the Clergy to endeavour this by doing their diligence in their Function, by acting according to the Powers of their Ministry in all things, and bringing to effect the Discipline of Christ. And therefore setting aside the particular Obligation upon Kings, Governors, and Magistrates, and Subordinate Officers of the Kingdom to see to the due Execution of the Laws thereof; I see nothing in Christianity that

that makes it the *Common Duty of all Men* (as the Author of the *Account* would have it) to give Informations to the Magistrate one against another, that all Wickedness may be punished with Temporal Penalties, nor that it is the *Particular Province* of those who have entred into the Places of *Overseers and Watch-men*, that is, of the Ministers of Christ's Church, to *teach all Men that this is their Duty* as Christians, nor that it should lie upon them in any respect to promote themselves Informations of this kind before the Civil Powers. There is a sad Truth indeed insisted on by that Authr in more places than one of his Book, to wit, *That there is little or no Reason to expect Help or Redress against the Wickedness of the Age from the Ecclesiastical Power by telling Offences to the Church, the Ecclesiastical Power being weakned, and the Discipline of the Church, which if it had been in Force, might have proved a Bank against the Flood of Wickedness that is broken in upon us, being now so lost, that it is of little use for the purpose of Reformation.* But is this come to pass through the fault only of them that bear the Power of the Church, and through their neglect only that the Discipline of the Church is of no effect? If so, it is fit the Authority of the Kingdom should oblige 'em to Act according to their

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Duty, and according to the Charge and Power of their Ministry. But if it be, that a several Corruption is the Occasion of this, it will lie upon all Christians to support in all they can the Discipline of the Church against the prevailing Power of Wickedness. If it be, that those who ought to exercise Discipline for the giving a stop to wickedness, have not now the power to do it, as being under Limitations in the Exercise of their Ministry; it must lie upon the Authority of the Kingdom, to see that restraint taken off, and to restore the Church to its Right and Power for the Ministering of Discipline. In the mean time there is, I grant, the greater Reason for the Authority of the Kingdom to employ its Power to suppress Vice, to stop the Avenues to Wickedness, and take out of publick view the Contagion of bad Example. It doth also the more concern Private Christians to labour every one with his Brother the Promotion of Piety and Godliness, by Exhortation, Admonition, Reproof and good Example, and all other Charitable and Christian Methods for this End. There is the greater Reason for the Clergy also to labour with diligence in the other works of their Ministry. But why this should be a Reason for those to go beyond their Ministry I do not see. By this

this Method to Prepare Men the better for the *Restoration of Godly Discipline* (says that Author); But probably there is cause to think, that Attempts of this kind by the Clergy might rather obstruct the Restoration of that Discipline, and prejudice Men against it; for that the Clergy have abused their Power in the Church to Tyranny, is an Objection that Worldly Policy hath made against the Church's being restored to her due Power, and against the setting up her Discipline: Which Objection, though it hath no force, for that the Clergy having abused their Authority, is no Reason why that Authority which is given the Church by Christ Jesus should not be allowed in its right and due Use: Yet it would be a Prejudice if the Clergy should act out of their Place and Sphere, and bring the force of the Civil Power upon those that live not as they would persuade them. Would it not presently be enquired, where was their Power in Christ to do this? how it belong'd to their Ministry, and what Right they had to *Lord it over God's Heritage* by the Force of the Secular Power? It might justly be said, they loved to Usurp and Exercise a Tyrannical Power, when their own having lost its Credit with the World, they should out of a desire to be doing and acting

acting Tyrannically, be the Instruments of bringing the Power of the Civil Magistrate upon those they should seek to reform by meek and gentle methods. I shall therefore say here, that no Blame can justly lie upon the Clergy of the Church of England for what this Author insinuates to be a neglect and Remissness in the greatest part of that Body, that is to say, their not assisting and joyning with the new formed Societies for Reformation in this Kingdom by putting the Laws of the Realm in Execution against Publick Wickedness. 'Tis without all doubt that the Clergy are concerned at all times to seek the Reformation of Christian Professors, and especially in such an Age as this, in which Wickedness so much aboundeth: These have Reason to take to Heart the no greater Success of their Endeavours to give a stop thereto, and upon this Account are concern'd to do all that's possible in their Office and Ministry for that purpose. Infomuch, as though not bound to engage in a Work that is Foreign to their Ministry, and which may give Offence and occasion for the Ministry to be blamed, and evil spoken of, they shall be obliged however, to take notice of what this Author has publickly said, and what themselves know to be too true, that the *Discipline of the Church*

Church is lost, which would have proved a Bank against that Flood of Wickedness which has broken in upon us. And as there is reason to think that the decay and loss of the Church's Discipline hath given a great inlet to that Wickedness which hath overflowed all parts of the Church, 'tis to be hoped we shall not always think it sufficient to lament the loss of the Church's Discipline once a Year in the Office for *Ashwednesday*, but shall in good earnest endeavour to restore the Ancient Discipline, and retrieve the Ecclesiastical Power to its Primitive Design. The Obligation upon all Christians to this seems to me so plain, that I cannot see how Men of Conscience can satisfy themselves with complaining of the Iniquity of the Age and wishing for Reformation, without having recourse to this Remedy. Upon the Clergy especially I look the Obligation is so great to restore this necessary part of their Ministry to some effect, that nothing can be more to them that make Conscience of fulfilling their Ministry in all things.

I suppose the vulgar Prejudice against Excommunication, which is the Penalty that Discipline endeth in, to them that submit not, will not be thought an Objection of any weight to hinder the Restoration of Discipline; that is to say, according

according to the false and weak Notion that many have thereof, that Excommunication is a Censure that giveth Men to the Devil. It hath been indeed said before that it is all one with the *Delivering up Satan* spoken of by *S. Paul*, and this a Spiritual sense, as he that is Cast out of the Church falleth under the Power of Satan; but the intention of the Church in putting thus in danger, is to warn Men to flee from the wrath to come, to make haste to get clear from the Power of Satan. This appeareth in the Practice of the Primitive Church, even towards them that were absolutely shut out of it; for those whose Sins were denied the hope of readmission to Reconcilement with the Church, being refused Penance, were yet sent to God with hope of Mercy; so that not only such as were brought to Penance and allowed the same, were recovered out of the Snare of the Devil and saved by the Discipline and Censure of the Church; but even that Key which did wholly shut out of the Church, did many times let ino Heaven, and was the means of Salvation to those whom with knowlege it excluded from all hopes of Reconcilement with the Church, to make them seek with the more solicitude and earnestness, Reconciliation with God.

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There is one Thing, which I foresee may be said, and framed into somewhat of an Argument against what I have been urging concerning a necessity of Restoring the Church's Discipline, which therefore I must say something to. It is this, That Discipline is not of the substance of Christianity but only Ministerial thereunto, that therefore as tis in the Power of the Church to alter the way of Exercising it, and vary the Circumstances thereof as shall be expedient, so it is in its Power to abate the strictness of Discipline, and even lay aside the use of it, if in the Judgment of the Church, the Intrest of Christianity shall so require. That this was done by the Primitive Church, when in several Cases the strictness of Discipline was remitted, and the Communion of the Church granted to Multitudes together without any Penance, to quiet Faction in the Church, or put an end to Schism, and sometimes only for sake of the great number of Offenders, who, 'twas supposed would not submit to the Rules of Discipline. That therefore the present Church may, in so broken and divided a State thereof as now it is in, remit the strictness of Discipline for the sake of Unity; wherein it must be owned the Intrest of Christian Religion greatly consisteth; yea, may
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without blame in the present disorderly State of Things, when the greater part of Christian Professors are so Lewd and Dissolute as to despise the Power of the Church and slight its Ministry, even be content to lay aside that Discipline which is not practicable to be kept up; which being slighted and despised by the greater part of Christian Professors, there is no likelihood any great good can come of it to the Christian Religion. To which I answer, That indeed the Method of Discipline has not been always the same in the Church, and that it is in the Power of the Church to make Alterations therein, taking that Order concerning it, which may be thought to make it most serviceable to Christianity: Nevertheless, it cannot be in the Power of the Church to lay the Discipline of Christ aside, nor yet to let it fall. The Power of Ordering its Ministry so as to make it most serviceable and effectual to the purposes of its Institution, is a Right that cannot but belong to the Church, and is of Duty employed by it, is the fulfilling of its Ministry: But to recede from, or lay aside any part of its Ministry cannot possibly be in the Church's Power, because the Church is subject to Christ, and bound always to have regard to his Institutions; is unfaithful to its Trust,

Trust, when it does not take heed to the Ministry it is charged with, and which it hath received of the Lord, to fulfil it. And as for what the Primitive Church did in remitting Discipline, and abating the strictness thereof in some particular Cases, we do not find it was done, but only when there was an urgent necessity forcing thereunto, for the avoiding some great Mischief, as when there was fear of Schism, or Faction, or some Mutiny against the Church's Authority from the multitude of Offenders. Besides, the Church, when it thus condescended to abate the strictness of its Penance, and give admission to its Communion without it, could not reasonably be understood to intend by the grant of its Communion to warrant forgiveness of Sins to those whom she so received, any further than that disposition of Mind, which the Parties themselves knew that they returned with, might warrant it. For it being evident that the Church waved the Rule by which it was wont, and according to which in the due and Regular Exercise of its Ministry, it ought to proceed; the Charge of making good that disposition which qualifyeth before God for the Communion of the Church, did in that respect devolve upon the Conscience of them that imposed the Necessity

cessity upon the Church to wave its
 wholesome Rules of Discipline. Moreo-
 ver, though the Primitive Church in
 particular cases of necessity did this to
 preserve the Being of the Church, which is
 ever of more moment than the Discipline
 thereof; yet afterwards the strictness of
 its Discipline was in all respects restored
 and acted to its proper Ends. So that
 the Primitive Church never thought it
 self to have Power to lay aside the Ordi-
 nance of Christ; but on the contrary, that
 as the Laws of our Lord and his Apostles
 were always an acknowledged Rule to the
 Church for its Government, so the Disci-
 pline of their appointment must be brought
 to effect by the Church at all times. An
 exception to a Rule is always looked on as
 a confirmation of the Rule in all cases not
 excepted. Therefore the Primitive Church
 keeping always a strict Discipline, and not
 abating thereof in any case, till satisfied
 of the Sinners Repentance, but only in a
 few cases that were extraordinary, where-
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 upon the Church to do otherwise; These
 extraordinary cases can never be pleaded
 for a ground of Power in the present
 Church to lay aside or let fall the Disci-
 pline which the Church ever stood charged
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ty ; but rather as they were Extraordinary, there is the greater reason thence to conclude, that the present Church cannot be at Liberty to depart from the Example of the Primitive Church in this particular, but is more strictly bound to have regard to that Discipline which is of the appointment of our Blessed Lord and his Apostles, and which the Primitive Church we must suppose thought it self obliged to observe, for that it did observe it always with great strictness, preserving by strict Canons even a Severity of Discipline for several Ages. As therefore it is a great mistake to think that the example of the Primitive Church, which abated of the strictness of Discipline in some extraordinary Cases, will justify our present Remissness in it ; so I fear it will be found upon examination, that the common Plea for this Remissness, which is, the broken and divided State of the Church, though it hath too much in it to the Prejudice of the Christian Religion, hath very little in it to excuse those that are intrusted by the Church with the Ministry of its Discipline, for not doing and discharging their Duty in the Ministration thereof. For though I will not say positively and absolutely that the bringing a few Souls by this Discipline to Repen-

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tance and to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, is of greater service to God and to the Christian Religion, than the gaining of hundreds that are vicious to the side of the established Church, and to a Profession of Communion with it; because the gaining of them to that Communion may be a means of their being gained over afterwards to true Christianity and to the Practice thereof; yet supposing them to continue vicious in the Communion of the Church, this must be said and allowed, though those Hundreds were Thousands. And our having had too long and great Experience, that the Number of true Christians hath not increased among us, how much soever the Number of Profelytes to the Party of the Church may, should make those, methinks, who have the care of the Church upon them and the Charge of its Ministry, concerned and solicitous to employ and exercise their Ministry to the utmost of their Ability for the making those good Christians that are already within the Church, as well as for making Profelytes to it: The one being little to the purpose of men's Salvation, while there is no care taken of the other, or indeed not a due Care. I take it also to be a vain fear, that the Restoring of Discipline in the Church

Church would lessen its Interest in the Kingdom; or give to the Schisms that are on foot an advantage as to number; for it will not be denied I presume, that Schismatics have taken advantage from the Remissness of our Discipline, or from that at least which is the consequence of that Remissness, the scandalous Lives of Professors among us, to draw off many well meaning Christians from the present established Church: And it is reasonable to think that when it shall be seen that the Ministry of the Church and the Discipline thereof are exercised and acted rightly and zealously to the known ends of their Appointment by Christ Jesus, namely, the Conversion of Sinners to Repentance, the Edification of them that do believe, and the Instruction and Conduct of them in Righteousness and Godliness; those well meaning Christians, now misled, may be then brought back into the Church, with many more who are Humble and Peaceable and Pious. When also the Lives of Christians who make up the Church shall become more Exemplary for Piety and Goodness, and it shall be visible that the Discipline of the Church contributeth chiefly to their being so; it cannot but be thought that such an Exemplary Conver-

sation should prevail as much or more than any other means what soever to bring Profelytes out of the world to Christianity, and to bring those that incline to profess Christianity, willingly to profess it in that Church where the Power and Purity of Religion is seen to be preserved by a Godly Discipline. Besides, it seems to be agreed by the different Parties in Religion among us, that bad Men are a Scandal to the best Religion, and that they cannot if they continue so, be saved in any. If therefore Schismaticks should be forward to receive them that shall be rejected by the Discipline of the Church, or that may go off from it, because of Disciplines being restored in it ; I do not see that the Church has any need at all to envy them the Credit or any other advantage that they are likely to gain by it ; much less can I think this a sufficient Reason for the Church to let its Discipline fall, which may be exercised to as great and as full effect, notwithstanding the opportunity that Refractory Sinners may have to go off to Schismaticks, and even also notwithstanding their receiving them, as if there were no Schism in the Church, nor no Schismatical Assembly ; that is to say, before God it may be exercised to as great and as full effect as if
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none of those things were ; because with him it availeth nothing for a man to profess Christianity, in any Society, not being a Christian in his Life and Conversation ; also before God a Vicious Professor departing and going off from the Church, because he will not be Subject to the Discipline thereof that would reclaim him from his wickedness, is disobedient and self-condemned and the greater Sinner : and though Schismaticks may pretend, receiving such among them, to receive or admit them into the Church of God, or allowing them their Communion to assure their Hopes towards Salvation by the Sacraments of God's Church which they have no Right to Administer ; nevertheless the Church has reason to declare her Judgment concerning all such Pretences, that She esteems them to be, what they really are as to God, even Nullities, void Acts that will deceive and betray those Souls in their hopes that depend on them : Void they must certainly be, as Administred to those, whom the Church shall reject as not qualified before God for Communion with the Church. For tho' it should be supposed that God of his Goodness in compassion to the ignorance and infirmities of Men, would make good

the Acts of men taking upon them to Administer the Sacraments of his Church without a due Authority, when their Integrity before him is such as renders them Innocent in their mistakes ; it is not to be supposed that any of their Acts shall by him be ratified to void the effect of his own Ordinances, and where what they do is with wilful design to void the same ; as the going off of Sinners from the Church to be at their Liberty to live Licentiously, and the receiving of such by any separate Assembly, if they be or shall be received by any, to their Communion in the Offices of God's Service, can be no other than wilful design in both, to Prejudice the Church of God and the effect of the Ministry thereof. I see therefore no reason why the Church should let fall its Discipline on this account ; nor indeed why it should not be resolute in Ministering Discipline, notwithstanding this, believing that as God is able so he will bring to effect his own Ordinance, and make the Ministry of his Church powerful over Wickedness, wheresoever it may seek or find shelter, within or without the Church. Neither may those that stand Charged with the Ministry of the Church hold themselves excused in laying aside or letting fall this

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Discipline, for that the greater part of Christians are grown so Lewd and Dissolute as to slight the Authority and despise the Power of the Church in this particular ; those being concerned to *see that no man despise them nor their Power in Christ ; to use sharpness according to the Power they have received of the Lord for Edification and the Government of the Church in Godliness.* It is requisite I allow that there be Prudence used in the management of this Power ; it must also be owned, that Prudence directing its management maketh it more serviceable to Christian Purposes, though its efficacy to those ends be from God. This is that which beareth out the Primitive Church in waving the Rules of its Discipline, when the Power of the Church was in danger otherwise of being despised ; its aim therein being to bring those that then stood against the Church, under the Government of the Church, and under the Controul of its Discipline for the future, which Aim was also compassed thereby. The case is altogether different where there can be no such, or no prospect at least of compassing any such Aim ; but if the Discipline of the Church be laid aside or let fall, it can be with no other Hope or Prospect, than that it must

be let fall for altogether. Now *whether* the Church can answer it to God, that She recede from and give up her Power and Ministry, for this that Wicked men despise her Power and hold her Ministry in the last Contempt, is the Question in this Case. And I do not believe that any man's Conscience will allow him to think the Trust of the Church well discharg'd to God, that shall recede from or give up any part of her Ministry or any Powers belonging to the same, for this Reason that Wickedness exalteth its self against her Ministry and seeketh to render her Power contemptible. This ought rather to awaken the Church to make full Proof of its Ministry, to exert all the Powers that Christ hath given her to the full, so to make appear that her Aims are not Carnal but Spiritual, mighty through God to put a stop to the prevailing Power of Wickedness. Such therefore of them that are intrusted with the Ministry of the Church, as are for consulting Human Prudence in these Circumstances, and acting their Ministry according to worldly Policy, I fear too little consult their own Obligations to God and his Church and the discharge thereof with a good Conscience. Prudence may and ought to be used at all times, especially in

in difficult Circumstances, to direct our Ministry to the best Service and Effect : But we ought not to suffer worldly Policy to raise a Dispute, Whether our Ministry should be employed or not, to the full purpose intended by Christ. A necessity is laid on us to fulfil our Ministry and leave the Issue and Effect to God, who to shew that his work dependeth not on man, hath given it a success in former time beyond what Human Wisdom could foresee; and is able still to give success and make his Work to prosper in the hands of his Ministers, even to make that Ministry of his Church powerful, which the Insolent Wickedness of this Time despiseth as weak and contemptible.

C H A P.

C H A P. IX.

IT must not be expected from me to say now in the Close of this Discourse, what Things are necessary to retrieve Discipline to its Primitive State and Use in the Church. This our Governours are to consult and account for. The Thing I shall take upon me to say, is, That an Attempt of this nature ought to be made. Not but that it must be said also for the Honour of the first Reformers of our Church, and of the Reformation in it; That as our Reformation hath been of the greatest Service to Christianity, in removing those gross and vile Abuses that were crept into the Discipline of the Church in times of Popery (which not only had perverted it from the use it ought to have in the Church of Christ, but so changed it, that instead of being a means to reform, it became the occasion of a farther Corruption in the Lives and Manners of Christians): So our Church cometh considerably nearer to the Apostolical Institution in her Discipline than most others; as
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having retained the use of Excommunication, and some use also of Penance, having a Canon that Notorious Offenders be not admitted to the Communion, and a particular Order to Parochial Ministers to refuse such. Nevertheless the Church has owned that there is a great Defect in her Discipline, in that she could not restore Publick Penance, and lamenteth that she could not bring about her Aim in this for a full Reformation. This we may suppose would not have been mentioned, but with hope that in future time there would be an Endeavour and might be an Opportunity for that to be compassed (which then could not be brought to pass) for the Interest of Religion and the Church of God. 'Tis not however for private Persons to make any attempt towards so good a Purpose, any farther than by their Prayers, that God would put it into the Hearts of those to whom he has committed the Care and Government of his Church, to consider of means by which the Discipline of Christ may be restored in his Church, and the Authority and Power of the Church retrieved for the exercise of it to the ends of Religion and Reformation: And that God would please to inspire them with Godly Zeal and Christian

stian Courage to use all proper and just Endeavours in so good a work.

What I may speak more freely in, as I hope, without Offence on the part of others, so without fear of giving it, or having it taken on my own, is this : That there is a very great and unexcusable fault, that the Discipline which the present Church of *England* hath Received and Established by its Rules and Canons, and Charged upon those that act in its Ministry, is not executed to its due Purpose and End in the Church of God. Whether this be chargeable on those that act in the Ministry, or on them that perhaps not disown, but slight and despise the Power of the Ministry, and will not be subject to wholsom Discipline, or on both ; I say, notwithstanding that it would be hard to fix the blame of this solely on the Ministry, both Ministers and People being in fault, both Corrupted together, and alike ; nevertheless it more especially concerneth all who have any part in the Ministry of this Church, to see the Discipline of the Church be brought to some better effect than it is at present, and that those Abuses, Corruptions, and Defects that are but too visible in the Ministration thereof, (and are the occasion that for the most part it is

is set aside; or where used, not to the purpose it should be in the Church of Christ, but in a manner that giveth Offence to good Christians, and Advantage to those that are otherwise to Reproach and Contemn the Discipline it self, together with them that act therein) be removed, and such Remedy found, such Course taken that the Discipline of the Church may be Executed with Authority and become effectual to Christian Purposes. I will take the liberty therefore here to say, that it is a fault of the Clergy in general, that there is not that done which is in our Power to do, not indeed that which by the Established Rules of our Church we are obliged to do for the making the Discipline thereof of some effect, to put a Restraint on the Looseness and great Corruption of the Age. It is our fault that we do not make use of that Authority and Power which we have, and may be supported in from the Laws of the Land as well as of the Church; that I mean, of debarring and keeping back Notorious Evil Livers from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and such as are perceived to live in Malice and Hatred, which the *Rubrick* impowers us to do, and strictly enjoyns to be done. And the Reverend Bishops of our Church

Rubrick in the Order for Administration of the Lord's Supper.

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to whom all Curats are to give notice of those whom they so repel, finding, I believe, very few Notices of this kind sent them, have but too much Reason to think that little or nothing of this kind is done, and consequently to require an account of it, and give Charge to their Clergy concerning it; representing the Duty incumbent on them, as they are entrusted with the Ministrations of the Sacraments of Christ's Church, and the encrease of Wickedness among Christian Professors through their Remissness and Neglect of Duty in this particular. I shall also desire Leave to say, That 'tis incumbent on the Reverend Bishops of our Church and all others, acting with Authority in the jurisdiction thereof, to make their Visitations to the purpose and effect they were designed in the Church of Christ, the Reformation of the Church and all its Members. 'Tis but too visible to all the World that Visitations have not their wished effect to the ends of Reformation. It must not be said that the whole fault lies in them that have the Government of the Church, that these, from partial regards, from some or other weak and Carnal Considerations are defective in their Duty. Something of this may be, and this may be in part the cause that

Discipline

Discipline is Administred in no better a manner, and to little purpose. But there is a fault in Churchwardens, that they have not a serious regard to their Oath, for making due Presentations; that whereas the abounding of Iniquity and Licentiousness in all Places should make them, if they have any Conscience, or the least concern for Religion and Christianity, take care that the scandalously Wicked of all sorts be brought to an account for their Lewd, Unchristian Living; they are content nevertheless to overlook and pass by notorious Wickednesses, as though they had taken no Trust upon them by their Office, on behalf of the Church of God. There is a fault likewise in Parochial Ministers, that whereas by the Canon they may, and ought to present, as they have the highest Obligations to suppress Iniquity, they nevertheless seldom do any thing of this nature. There is reason to think however, that these would do more in Assistance of their Bishops in this Work, if it appeared that our Episcopal Visitations could be made with some effect towards that purpose, and if there were a Reform made in the subordinate Officers and Ministers in our Ecclesiastical Courts, who at present, as all the World sees, Manage but very
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ill the Power of the Church, converting it chiefly to their own Advantage, with little or no regard to the Ends of Religion; insomuch that the strictness of Discipline is wholly abated, the Exercise of that which is Corrupted, the Proceedings against Offenders, Partial and Dilatory, and if any Penances are enjoyned, 'tis with almost no Respect to true Repentance, nor is much Consideration of that had in the Relaxation of such Censures: So many Subterfuges and Evasions are also found almost in every Case, that the good Rules of Discipline seldom take place. If it be in the Power of the Bishops of our Church to Redress these Evils, as in some measure doubtless it may, it must certainly be incumbent on them to take some effectual Course therein; if it be not in their Power, for that the Law of the Land may have given an Establishment to some of these Officers independent of the Bishop; there ought to be a Representation made to the Supreme Power of the Kingdom, how much the Church of Christ Suffers by this, that its Discipline cannot be managed according to proper Rules, as Anciently, by Bishops, with the assistance of their Clergy; and that the Authority of our Bishops is under such Restraint from the Legal Establishment

Establishment of Ecclesiastical Officers, as that it cannot make a Reform of Abuses and Corruptions among them that act even under that Authority. The World has long complained of, and indeed the Church long groaned under very great Disorders in the Management of Ecclesiastical Power, and in the Execution of the Church's Discipline; the which 'tis said, our Bishops have not Power to Remedy, but which the Civil Power giving Protection and Effect to the Authority of our Bishops may most certainly with ease Redress. But it belongs to Superiors to attempt in a proper way that Reform which all good Men wish to see effected. 'Tis not for me therefore to speak particularly of these Disorders that are, unless it be of them that are obvious to every view, and that visibly obstruct the effect of Discipline, and make it liable to Reproach and Contempt.

I will not say with some, that it's a direct Obstruction to its Effect, that Lay-Persons act therein, but something to the contrary; Namely, That the People ever had a Right of being satisfied in the Censures that Passed in the Church though no share in the Authority that judged they should pass. The Ancient Custom was,
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that all Acts of this kind Passed at the Publick Assemblies; and the Prayers of the People, or of the Church being one part of the means, to take away Sin by the Keys of the Church, the other being the Humiliation of the Penitent, according to that Order and Measure which the Bishop and his Presbyters prescribed, this was a ground for the People to give Suffrage to the Passing of such Censures as were advised and resolved on first in the Consistories of the Clergy. But the Body of Christians growing great and Corrupt withal, by the coming of the World into the Church, the concurrence of the People to these and other Acts of the Church was found to breed intolerable Trouble and Disorder, so that the Bishops, with their Clergy, Managed the Publick Acts of the Church by themselves or at least with chosen Persons out of the People, and those few in number, to avoid Confusion and Faction. Upon the like ground the present Church may be content to admit these Lay Persons that have Offices in our Ecclesiastical Courts to remain, and to have Satisfaction on behalf of the People, that the Power of the Church is not abused by them that bear that Power, and that the Proceedings of the Bishops and

and Clergy are according to the Rules of Discipline, and Justifiable before God and his Church. So that these pretend not to any part of the Ecclesiastical Power themselves, nor to have those that are Vested with that Power by Christ Subordinate to them in the Ministration of Discipline, which would be an Abuse that in probability must hinder all the Wished Effects of Discipline, and make it be thought not to be from the Power of Christ, nor to have any Force upon the Conscience; whilst those that are to Execute it by Power from him are limited therein by them that have themselves nothing of that Power; and may not of themselves act therein according to the Rules of Christ in his Gospel and their own Judgment of these Rules, but are determined to employ that Power which is Spiritual, after the Will of others, that have no Authority from Christ to judge in such Matters; whose Sentence consequently will not be allowed to have Force upon the Conscience, for that they are not Vested by Christ with any part of that Power of Binding and Loosing, which Christ hath given to his Church, or at least, no more of it than every other Christian has, that has no Authority over his Brother.

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I shall here farther take the Liberty to say, that it is an Abuse of Discipline, and such as greatly hindreth the Effect thereof, being one cause that Men have it in little Esteem; that the Censure of Excommunication is Passed many times for matters of no great moment or importance. That for which in Reason this Sentence is to be feared and regarded is this, That the Exclusion from the Church supposeth an Exclusion from God's Mercy and Favour; but if the Sentence that Cuts off from the Church be for a cause that cannot in Reason be thought to cut off from God's Favour, the Sentence will be thought to be invalid, and the Authority pronouncing it will be denied; it being known that the Sentence of the Church, without sufficient Cause doth not cut off from God's Promises; but that the Forfeiture of these is pre-supposed, before a Censure of that nature ought to pass. It is true indeed, a Wilful Contempt of the Church's Authority carries virtually in it every other Irregularity, and destroys the respect of that Authority, so that the Ends thereof can no way be attained; and consequently the Church that hath no Temporal Force to make her Authority be received, is under a necessity to employ its Censures

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in that Case, though the matter wherein her Authority is refused be not of the greatest moment. It is a Mistake therefore generally in the People, that think the Church Excommunicateth for matters of no moment, when her Censures terminate in this against such as continue in their Contempt of her Authority, or in a Refusal of her Judgment in those Cases that in themselves may not be of so much moment; for that it always will be of moment that the Authority of the Church be in no case despised. But inasmuch as Vulgar Christians will hardly be brought to understand this, whose Prejudices nevertheless the Church can't but be concerned at all times to remove; it would be well, if possible, to have all ground, yea, and colour for such Prejudices to be taken away: and in that respect better it were that the Authority of the Church were never interposed in such Matters as the World is not likely to acknowledge it, than that it should be despised, together with the Censures that should enforce it upon Men's Consciences by reason thereof. The matters in which the World doth not readily acknowledge the Church's Power and Authority, are Civil Rights, and Causes of a Secular Nature. Though it is true, that in the be-

ginning, Causes and Controversies of that nature among Christians were decided within the Church, upon which ground *S. Paul* forbids their going to Law in the *Gentile-Courts*, that they might not bring Scandal upon their Religion by their Contentions. But when the Civil Powers became Christian, the Scandal of going to Law ceased, and so the Right of determining Disputes about Civil Matters hath reverted from the Church to the Civil Magistrate. Those things of this kind that at present the Church's Jurisdiction extendeth to, are within its Jurisdiction by concession of the Civil Power, continuing the Church in some part of that Authority by Favour, which it had of Right in such Matters Anciently, when the Civil Power was not Christian. Now as these things more properly belong to the Law of the Land to determine, and as Conscience doth not seem to be always concerned in them, at least, not so much as that every Body will think that such as may refuse to do Right therein shall be Excluded the Kingdom of Heaven, therefore the Church proceeding to enforce its Sentence in such Matters by Censures, which terminate in Excommunication of those that refuse to obey its determination; the Vulgar presently

tently are apt to conclude, that the Church abuseth its Power in Christ, in Excommunicating for little Matters, such as there is not sufficient reason to think will exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven; nor considering that Disobedience and Contempt of the Authority of the Church of Christ is always a great Evil: But this being a thing that few will be brought to consider, the greater part in this Age being more inclinable to keep up Prejudices against them that bear the Power of the Church, upon undue grounds, than to admit Reasonable Considerations that would remove them; therefore I cannot but be of Opinion that it were better the Jurisdiction of the Church were not concerned with such Matters, or at least, that the Christian Magistrate, that alloweth the Church such Jurisdiction, would enforce the Sentence of the Church in such Cases by Law and Civil Punishment; that the Church might not be necessitated to make use of Ecclesiastical Censures in cases where they are likely to be Despised, and the Authority of the Church held as Contemptible.

I shall here moreover take Leave to say, that its a Corruption of Discipline; if there be any Partiality either to Sins, or

Persons: If there be any Partiality as to Sins, some Censured, and others not; for it is not to be thought that Christ, in Settling such a Power and Order as this in his Church, should intend otherwise but that it should take Cognizance of all Sins Notorious and Heinous, that none escape Uncensured: Or if there be any Partiality or Respect of Persons, if a Great Man be let alone in his Licentiousness, because he has either Power or Money; or indeed, if other Sinners are let alone and passed by, because they are too little, and no Profit to be made of them. There is also a Defect, and it will ever be a Reflection upon the Discipline of the Church, if it appear not that the main aim of those that are any way concerned in the Ministration of Discipline, is indeed that which the Discipline was Instituted for, namely, The due Government of Christ's Church in Piety and Godliness, and the Reformation of whatsoever should be Amis therein. I would not be taken to suggest that it is not Reasonable that those that Attend upon any Part of the Ministry should not Live upon their Office, but I would have all such make it appear, that they have in view chiefly the Ser-

Service and Benefit of God's Church and People, Reformation, and not their own Gain or Secular Intrest.

Let me have Leave also here to say, that its a Fault and a Corruption of Discipline to admit or accept Commutations for Penance: For though Acts of Charity are the Tokens of a Penitent Mind, and avail much towards the obtaining God's Favour and Mercy, according to that which the Apostle has said of *Charity*, that it *covereth a Multitude of Sins*; Yet a forced Gift to the Poor, for certain can be of no Avail. The Apostle supposes, a Man may give all his Goods to the Poor, and yet not have Charity. An Offender may give to avoid Censure, or rather, Secular Inconveniences from it; but shall that be esteemed Charity, or shall it be presumed a Token and Sign of Repentance? Yea, he may give Voluntarily, and yet continue in his Sins; and shall Charity be thought an Expiation for Sins wilfully continued in? or indeed, a Satisfaction to God's Church, as to the taking off Ecclesiastical Censures pass'd on such, when their Amendment other ways appears not? It withal brings an Evil Report even on the Discipline it self, as well

well as on them that Minister it. I hope, with us there is no such thing as putting up Commutation Summs, but it is well known such things have been Objected, as though the Ministers of Discipline put themselves in place of the Poot. It were therefore unquestionless much better if Commutations were never medled with; it would remove all Scandal, and prevent false Reports, and be never the worse for the Poot. For if the Discipline of the Church can bring once Sinners to be truly Penitent, they will be of themselves disposed to do Voluntary Acts of Charity.

These Defects and Abuses, and whatever others there are that may hinder in any respect the wished Effects in Discipline, all who have any hand, or part in the Ministry are concerned, if possible, to remove and remedy. And so valuable would the Effects of Discipline be, duly Exercised and Administred, to the Church of God and the Intrest of our common Christianity, that I shall say without fear of Contradiction, that it would be the Glory of our Reformation to bring it to be of Effect, as it is now our Reproach, that we have suffered the Discipline of Christ's Church to be laid aside

and rejected in the most essential parts of it; and to be so Corrupted in what remains thereof with us, that the same in a manner of no Effect or Advantage to the Church of God.

But if our Sins are still too Powerful to suffer the due and right course of Ecclesiastical Discipline to take place among us as it ought; let us advertise all good Christians of a private Benefit and Advantage which every Man may make to himself from what has appeared in this Discourse, of the Nature and Interest of Discipline, while those who are concerned to bring it to Effect do it not, or labour to do it, but without Success. If this Discipline cannot be brought to a due Effect throughout the Church, i. e. to be Exercised for its true Purposes, and Submitted to for its true End; nevertheless, every Man may learn from what this Discipline was, and from what it ought to be, something that concerneth the state of his own Soul, and how to supply in some measure to himself the want of the due Effect of this Ordinance of Christ, which is become defective through the Wickedness of Men. Every one must be sensible, from what hath been here before said of the nature of Discipline, and its Practice

Practice in the Primitive Church; that whosoever was Admitted into the Church of Christ, was Admitted upon his Engagement to live Christianly, this being indeed the Resolution that ~~encl~~ to the Mercy of God in Christ Jesus upon the Terms of the Gospel; that whosoever failed of performing and making good this his Undertaking, forfeited thereby all Right to the Blessings of the Covenant, and was therefore, by them that had the Oversight and Care of the Church of God to be called to Account, to be Rebuked and Censured, and if found Obstinate in Wickedness, to be Cut off from the Church of God; that such an one might thereby be made sensible that his Sins had cut him off from the hope of Salvation; whereof this Advantage every Man may, and it is to be hoped, will make for himself, to wit, conclude, and judge aright concerning the state of his own Soul, that is to say, That if his own Heart Condemn him of Sins inconsistent with Christianity, he reckon that God will much more Condemn him; and betake himself therefore immediately to Reform every Evil Practice, not daring to presume on God's Mercy and Favour whilst he lives in Sins unrepented, within

him the Bosom of a Church, wherein
Discipline of Christ not having place,
Admission to the Sacraments cannot
to him a sufficient Presumption of a
true Intrest in the Benefits of Christ; but
including that though he be not cut off
from the Society of God's Church, yet,
his sins unrepented, justly cut off his
hopes of God's Favour; and will utter-
ly Exclude him from his Heavenly King-
dom; if he be not so true to the Intrest
of his Soul, as henceforth to become a
true Penitent.

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